

# ANIMALS & MEN



THE JOURNAL OF THE CENTRE FOR FORTEAN ZOOLOGY



*On the track of an Ape-man*

**Sumatra 2003 : Expedition Report**

Bolam BHM Hair analysis; Sabre tooth survival; Big Cat research; new monkey species in Guyana?

Issue 31

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# Animals & Men #31

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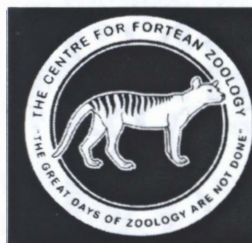
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## EDITORIAL

jonathan downes



Dear Friends,

Welcome to issue 31 of the world's *only* dedicated cryptozoological magazine. I should have been typing this editorial (and you should have been reading it) about five weeks ago. However a string of technical problems and equipment failures mean that instead of the magazine being published in mid-July it is now the end of August. Sorry, but like the cock ups with the page numbering with some copies of this issue it is really totally beyond our control

However, the last five months of the CFZ have seen us growing into the organisation that we have always striven to be. At the *Unconvention* in April we got over fifty new members, and as a result of this – the biggest influx of new blood since the CFZ's inception in 1992 In July our ranks were swollen by the advent of Elliot Saunders, an administrator and computer whizzkid from Wales who has donated enormous amounts of time and effort (and a not inconsiderable amount of money) to the cause. With his help we have launched a number of important new projects and finally are in the position of being able to do some of the work that we have been planning for years.

If you visit the website and go to the navigation bar which denotes the 'projects' section. Please feel free to read through the projects and volunteer for any that take your fancy. We are also looking for more regional representatives.

As can be seen from the faculty boards on the next two pages we have had a major increase in the number of regional representatives in recent months but we still need more. We are at present designing a free CD Rom, which will be sent to all regional representatives. It will contain report forms, stationary and posters as well as some instructions on how to carry out some of the more arcane tasks that face a regional representative of the world's largest cryptozoological research organisation.

We are also investing in software Research and Development. CFZ Member Partha Lal is working on the first of three projected pieces of CFZ software. If there is anyone else out there in the CFZ membership who has software designing skills, please feel free to contact us. There is plenty more work that needs to be done.

In about six weeks time we shall be holding our fourth annual convention – The Weird Weekend. This is a chance for CFZ members from all over Europe to meet each other, discuss tactics and research projects and attend lectures on cryptozoological and related subjects. This year's event will be held on the first weekend in October in Exeter, and it goes without saying that you are all invited. It costs fifteen quid for the weekend, and all proceeds go to CFZ funds.

Best wishes,

Jon Downes

*The great days of zoology  
are not done.....*



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## 2003



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*"In her abnormalities, nature reveals her secrets." (Goethe)*

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edited and compiled by jon and richard



## SWIMMING HORSES

After years of assuming that the tiny creatures that they had collected from coral reefs in the western Pacific were the juveniles of known species, scientists admitted recently that they have discovered the world's smallest seahorse. The pygmy seahorse averages 0.64 inches in size, smaller than a fingernail, and is a master of camouflage; and it is this strategy alone that has protected it from the over-exploitation threatening other types of seahorses. Sadly, the greatest risk to this newly discovered fish is underwater tourism.

*"Divers and photographers could possibly love these animals to death,"* said Sara Lourie, a McGill University biologist who led the identification project and is also a member of Project Seahorse, an international effort to protect the animals from overfishing and habitat loss.

Before this discovery there were 32 known species of seahorse, but some scientists believe there could be as many as 50, and this new discovery has pointed them in the direction of where to look. The results of this new study were published in the latest edition of Zoological Studies.

## KAMIKAZE KOURTSHIP

Richard's fondness for the writings of H.P. Lovecraft has been noted in these pages before, but the animal recently captured alive for the first time by Australian scientists off the Great Barrier Reef has a more unpleasant life cycle than anything which came out of the annals of Miskatonic University.

A group of scientists from the universities of Melbourne, Tasmania and Leeds were on a night dive suspended in deep water when they captured the tiny male of a bizarre species of octopus, which carries a battery of sting cells and is 100 times smaller than its female counterpart.



### Female Blanket Octopus

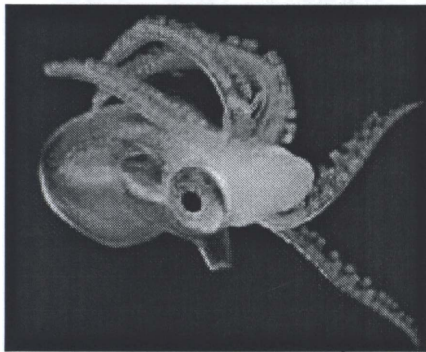
The discovery is described in the latest issue of the *New Zealand Journal of Marine and Freshwater Research*. *"You always hope you might bump into something like this."* said Dr Mark Norman, an honorary fellow at the



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department of zoology at the University of Melbourne. "The chance is infinitesimally small."

While other octopus species also have size differences between the sexes - known as sexual size-dimorphism - the blanket octopus is the most extreme example known. The male specimen discovered is 2.4 cm long, weighing just 0.25 kg. Mature females have been measured at 2 m in length, weighing about 10 kg. The male seems to have adapted to his small size, having a comparatively large eye which could help in locating females. Being small may also mean that they take less time to mature, but sex is a one-off and probably fatal affair. They allocate one of their arms to reproduction, keeping it in a pouch in the centre of their tentacles. When they mate, the pouch ruptures, sperm is injected into the tip of the modified arm, which is then severed and passed to the female.



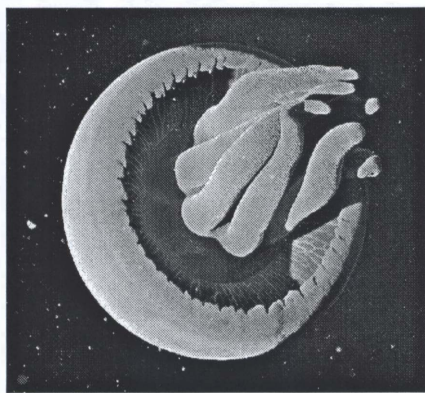
The Male Blanket Octopus

Thereafter, the male then almost certainly dies, while his detached arm remains in the female's mantle cavity until it is used to fertilise her eggs. Females are often found with several arms in their cavity, indicating competition

amongst males. The scientists have never found a dead male with a new arm, suggesting that they die after mating. Source: *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, Wednesday, 5th, February 2003

## CALIFORNIA UBER ALLES

Proving (as if any proof were needed), that even at the beginning of the 21st Century the world is still a mysterious place a bizarre new species of jellyfish has been discovered in the deep waters off the Californian coast. It is over a metre in diameter and is a deep maroon in colour. The US and Japanese teams that discovered it have named the creature "Big Red" and say the species is so unlike anything ever captured before that it deserves its own subfamily. *Tiburonia granrojo* was discovered using video cameras on deep-diving remotely operated vehicles (ROVs). Its colour and shape set it apart from its other gelatinous relatives, but it has another unusual jellyfish characteristic - a complete lack of tentacles.



The bizarre creature has four to seven fleshy arms that it uses to capture food. While jellyfish species normally can be distinguished by the

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number of tentacles they have, the number of arms seems to differ wildly between individuals of this new species.

*"Diving almost every day, we tend to take for granted some of the unusual and even bizarre animals that we see in the deep ocean"* says George Matsumoto at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute in California, who led the study. *"This just shows that we need to keep our eyes open, because there's still plenty to discover down there."*

## MYRIAD MARINE MAORIS

There cannot be a zoologist alive who does not envy Charles Darwin and his epoch-making voyage on HMS Beagle. We have all dreamed of making such a voyage and returning home with a plethora of new species to our credit. Sadly, at the beginning of the 21st century such voyages are few and far between, but this summer New Zealand and Australian scientists on board RV Tangaroa arrived in Wellington after four weeks sampling the sea floor and deep waters along the Norfolk Ridge and Lord Howe Rise, with freezers full of rare and unidentified fish, squid, corals, sponges, shrimps and other species.

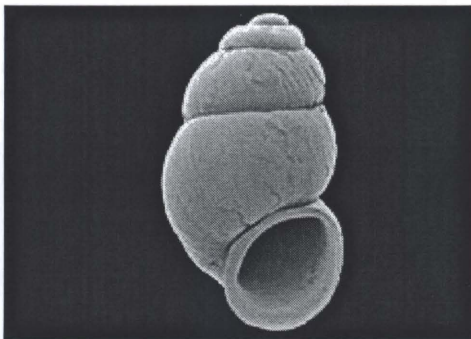
More than 400 new species of fish and other animals, including jelly-like fish, have been discovered.

*"The list of new species and new distributional records are getting very impressive,"* Mark Norman of the Museum of Victoria said. *"The voyage has collected samples and records of more than 500 fish species and over 1100 invertebrate species."*

New finds included jelly-like sea cucumbers, fish resembling blobs of mucous, several species of blue rays found only near Lord Howe Island, crabs, starfish and sea anenomes, and a new species of redfish, a commercial species. The expedition, which cost over a million dollars, was funded jointly by the New Zealand Fisheries Ministry and Australia's National Ocean's Office.

## THING ON THE DOORSTEP

The News agency Swissinfo announced on May 3rd that a new species of freshwater snail has been discovered in Switzerland by researchers at Basel University. The tiny mollusc, which measures just 1.5 millimetres, was found in two springs in Canton Ticino, in the Italian-speaking part of the country.



*"This surprising piece of news clearly shows that the discovery of a new species is not a prerogative of tropical forests or deep in the oceans,"* said Basel University's department of integrative biology, which carried out the research.

Well duh!



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## PITTA BRED

## LESS IS MOORE

An exciting ornithological rediscovery took place in Burma in the early summer when Gurney's pitta, a strikingly-coloured species described as "*teetering on the brink of extinction*" was seen for the first time in almost 90 years. The only other known survivors are about 30 birds living in a small part of southern Thailand. However, the long-term prospects of the Burmese group are clouded by forest clearance plans.



The pittas were found at four lowland forest sites, with a maximum of 10-12 pairs at one of them. The last confirmed sighting of Gurney's pitta in Burma was in 1914.

The team were unable to travel everywhere it wanted, and believes there may be significantly more pittas living in unexplored parts of the forest.

*Conservation International* announced on June 12th that a newly described and critically endangered pygmy-owl species discovered in Brazil was named after Intel founder Gordon Moore and his wife Betty Moore in recognition of their contributions to biodiversity conservation.



The description of the bird appears in the most recent edition of the "*Brazilian Journal of Ornithology*."

The tiny owl, measuring 6 inches from bill to tail and weighing a mere 2 ounces, was found in fragmented secondary forest in Pernambuco state in northeastern Brazil. It will be known as *Glaucidium mooreorum*, or by its common name, the Pernambuco pygmy-owl.

In 2001, the Moore Foundation made one of the largest gifts in environmental history by giving Conservation International \$261 million in a series of grants over 10 years to implement a major global strategy for biodiversity conservation.

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## BOTTOMS UP

Lavarack's turtle was identified and named in 1994 after scientists found fossil remains, which they displayed at the Queensland Museum. They assumed the species had become extinct at the start of the most recent ice age, 15,000 years ago. Now a live specimen—a young male—has turned up. *"It is the first of our turtles to be found as a fossil, then as a living creature,"* Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service conservation officer Col Limpus said in early June. *"It has survived relatively unchanged for thousands of years."* This turtle is particularly interesting because its cloaca not only conceals its reproductive organs but also a pair of gill-like sacs. It quite literally breathes through its bum! The CFZ News Team have been very restrained in not making further comment on this issue.

The fish has a long thin body like an eel, but also has a full set of fins, Zuanon said. Although the carnivore only measures about 6 inches, it has a tail like the Pirarucu, one of the world's largest freshwater fish. Curiously it also has up to 10 air chambers, compared to the usual two or three that fish use to hold their position underwater, leading the scientists to believe it can breathe at the surface, Zuanon said.

*"As far as we know it eats small shrimps and aquatic insects, it reproduces at the start of the rains, and has this extra breathing ability... and it doesn't just depend on oxygen that has been dissolved in the water",* he said.



## SCALES OF JUSTICE

Reuters on July 3rd announced that Brazilian scientists have discovered a new fish so unusual that it has had to have a new genus created for it. *"Its a new species which will require us to create a new genus and a whole new family to accommodate it,"* Jansen Zuanon, head aquatic biology researcher at Brazil's National Amazon Research Institute, or Inpa, told Reuters.

*"It still doesn't have a name,"* Zuanon said. *"We have been calling it the mystery fish because it didn't fit into any group... It's long-bodied with a mixture of characteristics which are quite different from any other Amazon fish group."* "A new family of fish hasn't been categorized in probably the last 150 years," the biologist said, adding that the discovery of new species was quite common.

## CHINESE CRACKERS

One cannot but admire the fortitude of a Chinese man identified only as Yu who has decided to build a home-made helicopter which he plans to use to look for the Wild Man of Shennongjia — the local name for the yeren reported from the forests of Hubei Province. The magnificent man's flying machine consists of a frame made of iron bars, an old sofa for a seat, propellers made from second-hand wood and it is powered by a car engine. The Hong Kong edition of *China Daily*, quoting the *Beijing Star Daily* said on the 23rd June that *"he decided to build the helicopter as the remote area cannot be reached by road."* We have strong doubts that such a Heath Robinsonesque contraption would ever manage to leave the ground but Yu should be applauded for trying!



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Bizarrely a week after this ridiculous news report was made public the Xinhua News Agency reported that "An ape-like beast nearly 1.65 metres tall" had been sighted in the Shennongjia forests. *"The greyish 'mythical ape-like animal', was reported to have shoulder-length black hair,"* said an unnamed official.

Chinese wildlife officials launched an investigation after six separate reports including one from a reporter from the local this particular rath of interest both to the good TV station were received. Shang Zhengmin, the reporter, and five others were on the way back to Songbai town from Muyu town when they sighted the creature. The news report continued: *"When the vehicle they were in took a left turn along the mountain road, four people the vehicle saw an ape-like animal moving fast on the road. But as the vehicle finished the turn, the animal had disappeared. The passengers got out of the vehicle and found several 30 centimetre-long footprints and newly broken branches in the jungle near the road. On the road where the animal was spotted, they claimed to have discovered a three-meter-long patch of foul smelling urine-like liquid."*

## THE GRIPES OF RATH

Arguments between political factions in Northern Ireland are nothing new, and are usually not to be found written up in the pages of this august journal. However *The Irish News* on the 30th June reported on a row between Sinn Féin and SDLP councillors in Antrim. Under the headline *"SF rath claims provoke the wrath of the SDLP"* the *Antrim Guardian* reports that Sinn Féin has been accused of making local councillors "a laughing stock". It is the humble opinion of this particular scribe that most local politicians

whatever their political allegiances are a laughing stock, but as Sherlock Holmes would no doubt have said this case presents some interesting aspects. According to the original report: *"Councillor Martin McManus, a keen local historian, called for an official archeological investigation at the Fairy Hill in Rathenraw which he claims is an ancient rath."*

A rath is an ancient earthwork, but what makes this one of interest both to the good Sinn Féin Councillor and to us is that this particular earthwork is reputedly the haunt of the little people.

I have incurred the (w)rath (I'm sorry the pun was irresistible) of many folk in the Bigfoot research community both here and abroad for insisting that whereas sightings of man beasts in Asia, Africa and some parts of North America may well have a zoological explanation, those from the UK, western Europe and the more populated parts of the USA – in my humble opinion – are zooform phenomena of a non corporeal nature. As a witness of one of these things at Bolam Lake last January I feel myself to be far more qualified to comment than many of the armchair experts who promptly banned me from their forums for the crime of zoological apostasy. If we are prepared to allow non corporeal "big hominids" into these pages then we should also allow their smaller brethren, and so as a victim of fortean sectarianism myself I am sympathetic towards Councillor McManus who went on to state that locals had *reported many sightings of the Shee in and around the estate'.*

Mr McManus added: *"To date, in the absence of an actual capture of a leprechaun, all reports of leprechaun sightings have to be dismissed by all reasonable people because the witnesses claimed that the leprechauns they spotted were a metre in height."* Mr McManus went on to say that although some might say that such claims were dubious, people in the Rathenraw community

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were "excited about the rath in their midst, especially with the added bonus of many sightings of the Shee."

His political opponents were appalled. SDLP man Donovan McClelland. told the Antrim Guardian: *"Sinn Fein claims of people sighting Irish leprechauns near Rathenraw are embarrassing and make Antrim councillors look foolish."* Sadly we have been unable to find out what happened next and have not been able to contact either politician. My personal message to Mr McClelland is that if he *really* wants to see politicians talking outlandish nonsense he should look across the Irish Sea to the antics of the present incumbents of the Palace of Westminster who make speculation about the wee folk in rural Antrim seem positively sensible.

Meanwhile in Ecuador (at least according to Ananova on the 4th April) Police in the town of Quininde were *"investigating reports of a little, green man seen walking down the street."* Witnesses all described the creature as being very small, green and ugly."

Marco Preciado told Diario Extra online: *"It was less than three feet tall and I saw it three times. I tried to follow him but he disappeared."* Cecilia Cedeno who owns a liquor shop, said: *"He appeared in front of the shop to a group of people. He gave a loud laugh and run away."*

Perhaps the mystery of what some alleged Irish "political activists" were doing in South America recently has been solved. They were on a fact-finding mission for Councillor McManus.

## GOING TO MONTANA SOON

Debi Beach and her husband Alan were driving to their home in Martin City, Montana when they saw what they later described as a tall, dark, humanlike creature crossing an area of grassland outside the city. They later found patches of tall grass *"all mashed down,"* and could hear the sound of barking dogs – apparently alarmed by the strange creature. That was Saturday. June 7. By the following Monday, the local media and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks were onto the story. FWP reported the sighting as the first for Flathead County, but the fifteenth in Montana: *"Early indications were that it was a naked man in the forest, but I've read some other that suggest the being 'as far too hairy to be a naked man."*

There is now't that we can add to that.

## LAKE AND SEA MONSTERS



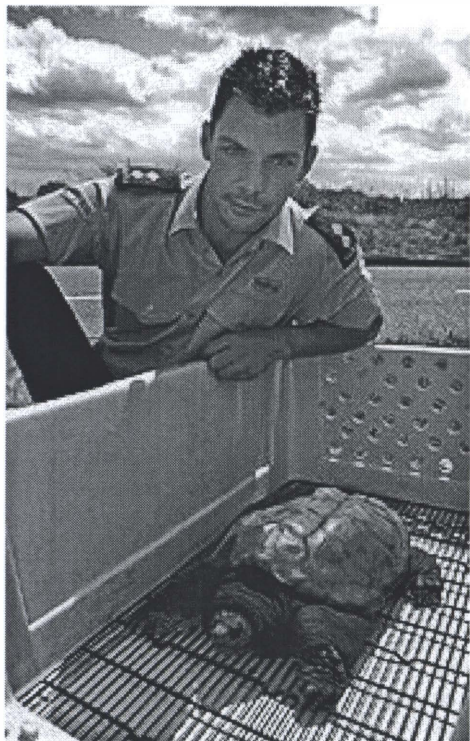
### TURTL-EY AMAZING

Visitors to the CFZ often ask why we have two alligator snapping turtles amongst our menagerie. Apart from the fact that these are animals of which I am very fond, they are animals with a very definite cryptozoological connection. For one thing they appear to have a much more northerly range than is generally accepted. Although established wisdom is that these animals are confined to the southern states of the USA, persistent reports from further north



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suggest that they may be found as far north as Canada. When I lived in Canada for a short time in 1979 I saw several enormous snappers both wild and in unsheltered captivity in southern Ontario. Although the common snapping turtle is known from Canada, I realise that these animals were far too big to be that species. One of ours – Quasimodo – has successfully overwintered in our back extension with minimal heating. As the species is listed as globally endangered the probability of there being extensive new populations of the animal awaiting discovery can only be a good thing.



"Lucky" the Walsall Snapper

Another bone of contention with the species is quite how big they grow. *The Atlanta Journal Constitution* of July 19th reports an enormous specimen in Berkely Lake, Georgia. They write: "Residents near this suburban pond are swapping stories about a freakishly big turtle cruising the 88-acre lake. Biologists say the turtle can't be any bigger than 75 or 80 pounds. Witnesses argue it weighs at least 150 pounds. One bystander thought the turtle was a boulder until he stuck his head out."

In another piece of snapping turtle news, a common snapper dubbed "Lucky" by the RSPCA was found in early July in a brook near Walsall in the West Midlands only a stone's throw from the pond where the CFZ recently undertook a hunt for a mystery crocodilian. (See our website for details).

## CHAMPING AT THE BIT

A recent magazine article in the June/July issue of *The Skeptical Enquirer* pours cold water on the 1977 Sandra Mansi photograph purporting to show *Champ* – the monster of Lake Champlain. Not at all newsworthy you might say. Ordinarily we would agree with you, but on the second of July *Champ Quest* Director Dennis Hall told the *Plattsburg Press-Republican* that he is unconvinced by the article.

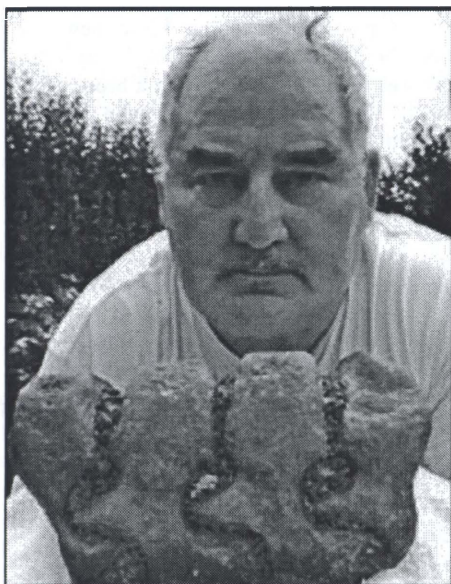
"I'm certain something is out there," Hall said. "I've seen it. There are just too many sightings to dismiss it. *Champ* exists." There have been several sightings this year, he said.

Sadly, our attempts to contact him for further details have been fruitless. However, as we were going to press some new sightings *did* occur and we will be covering them next issue.

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## HIGHLAND THINGS

The *Daily Record* of Jul 16 2003 proudly announced that *"A fossil found by pensioner Gerald McSorley, submerged in shallow water in Loch Ness has been confirmed as a plesiosaur."* This provoked a media feeding frenzy unparalleled in the crypto world since our hunt for the monster of Martin Mere this time last year.



Mr McSorley with his dubious specimen

Charles Paxton - the CFZ Consultant Ichthyologist - told us *"I just spoke to the chap who examined the Loch Ness fossil plesiosaur vertebrae block He said the block showed evidence of 'marine' bio-erosion and he thought the provenance was very odd too"*

It looks like someone bought the fused plesiosaur vertebrae from a fossil shop but as Karl Shuker (Cryptozoological consultant for the CFZ) confirmed they can be very expensive. A cursory trawl round some online fossil shops suggested that whoever dropped it would have paid about £400 for it.

We later spoke to Darren Naish (Zoological Consultant for the CFZ) who said that some fossil plesiosaur bones have been found in other parts of Scotland. We concluded however that if it had been a "found" specimen, the person who found it would have to have known pretty much what they are doing.

We are left with three possibilities:

1. It was accidentally placed there by persons unknown. (The synchronicity of it being a plesiosaur bone on the shores of the most famous place in the world where a modern day plesiosaur is alleged to exist makes this almost impossible).

2. It was a hoax done by someone who was lucky enough to find the specimen somewhere else. (Again unlikely, because the level of knowledge needed to identify the bone as being from a Plesiosaur is somewhat specialised). If this is the case then the hoaxer would almost certainly have to be someone within the cryptozoological or palaeontological communities.

3. It is a deliberate hoax by someone with a vested interest in the loch ness monster - and furthermore someone who is happy to spend four hundred quid on such an endeavour. The CFZ can think of at least one possible culprit who would be only too happy to increase the media interest in the lake at the beginning of the school holiday season. However, the laws of libel forbid us to go any further.

Will the real hoaxer please stand up!

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## VISIONS OF CHINA

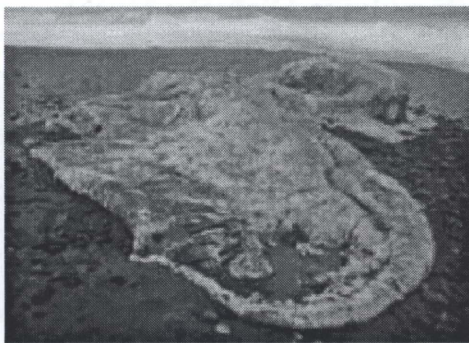
In more Loch Ness related news the BBC recently broadcast an extremely expensive documentary in which TV Vet Steve Leonard spent 60 minutes (with the aid of stunning but ultimately pointless special effects) proving that a plesiosaur could not live in Loch Ness therefore there could not be a Loch Ness Monster. As no-one worth their salt within the cryptozoological community has believed the plesiosaur theory for years (the smart money is that it is a giant eel), one can only stand back aghast at yet another criminal waste of license payers money. As the BBC then phoned me up the following day wanting to follow us on one of our expeditions which have a proper scientific rationale behind them), offering us a fee of precisely NOTHING, and were quite rude to us when we refused, the broadcasting corporation which was once the pride of the world is not the most popular member of the worlds media at CFZ Mansions at the time of going to press. (For more comments on the afore-mentioned documentary see the letters page).

Slightly more encouraging news from Loch Ness comes in the shape of eccentric German film Director Warner Herzog (who is responsible for *Fitzcarraldo* — one of my favourite films of all time), is making a documentary about Nessie. Apparently (according to our spy Mark Martin who spent three days stalking Herzog in late July), one of Herzog's special effects — a boat carrying enormous smoke generators — caused havoc on the loch and led to emergency services being mobilised.

Just as we were going to press news began to filter in that no less a personage than Robert Rines has presented new evidence suggesting that the Loch was indeed connected to the sea during the last Ice Age and (or so it is whispered) that it wasn't iced over at all! More on this as we get it.

The Lake Tianchi monster, which last year was seen simultaneously by five hundred simultaneous has been seen again. On the morning July 11, several local government cadres caught sight of a school of mysterious creatures swimming through the lake in the Changbai Mountains, in northeastern Jilin province, according to the Beijing Youth Daily. *"Within about 50 minutes, the monsters appeared five time"*, it quoted one of the officials, provincial forestry bureau vice-director Zhang Lufeng, as saying. *"At times there was one, at times there were several. The last time, there was as many as about 20."* He said the creatures, two to three kilometres (1.25-2 miles) in the distance, appeared only as white or black spots. But from the ripples in the water, he and others determined the spots were *"living beings."* The creature(s) were also seen by a group of Chinese soldiers a few days later.

## I AM THE SLIME



In early July this mass of decaying flesh washed up on a beach Chile. For weeks the cryptozoological community was abuzz with speculation and comment with many people theorising that it was the long awaited second specimen of Verril's giant octopus — but sadly it turned out to be a lump of rotting whale meat.



# Animals & Men #31

## THE MOON BOG

CBC News in Newfoundland reported that Newfoundland's Crescent Lake is home to "a snake-like creature with a fish-like head. Vivian Short of the town of Roberts Arm who used to be an unbeliever until she saw it one day while walking with a friend:

*"I was just a screamin' 'We saw Cressie, we saw Cressie!' Excited, eh," she said. "Well, I said to my friend, 'Oh my that's big. That could eat four or five people if they were swimming, like.'"*

The magnificently named Ada Roswell, (the town's clerk), said Short's wasn't the only reported sighting:

*"I've had several reports of sightings. People sighting some kind of a huge monster or sea serpent or some kind of a fish."*

## OVERNITE SENSATION

Another story from CBC News – this time on 25th June told of Wallace Cartwright, a lobsterman from Cape Breton Island, who says that he saw a sea serpent.

*"I was kind of leery of approaching it," he told CBC Radio. "God knows, the thing might have been able to jump out of the water, you know? And I'm sure it could have swallowed you whole."*

In 30 years on the water, he'd never seen anything like it, and he's been hesitant to tell anyone.

But word got out about the creature he and his

mate thought at first was a floating log. As the fishing boat got closer, Cartwright said, the animal raised its head. *"It had a head on it like a sea turtle, and it had a body like a snake about as big around as a five-gallon bucket,"* he said.

Cartwright trailed the eight-metre-long creature for about 45 minutes — from a distance — before going back to fishing.

The curator of zoology at the Nova Scotia Museum claims that what Cartwright saw was an oarfish. However we have never heard of an oarfish matching *that* description.

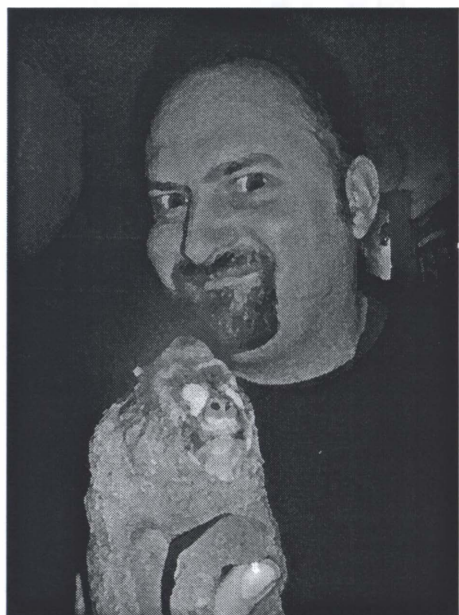
## CONJOINED CAUDATES

We were recently sent this photograph of a double yolked newt egg. It isn't at all monstrous but we couldn't think of anywhere more suitable to put it....



# Animals & Men #31

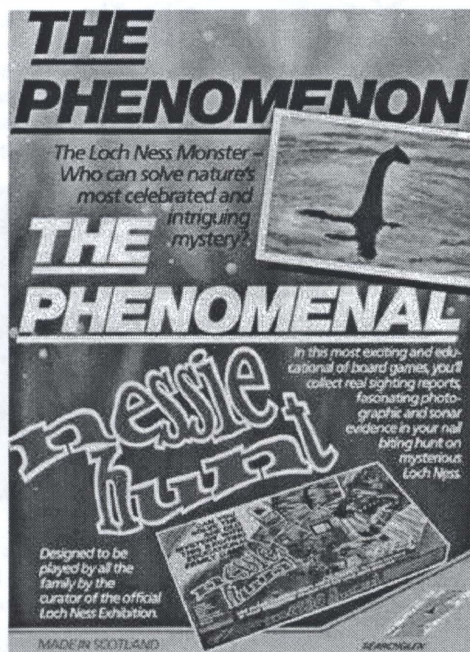
And finally  
Richard....



A suburb of Christchurch, New Zealand, was brought to a standstill in early June by a suicide-bombing chicken. A member of the public alerted the authorities after seeing a fanatical fowl charging around the city sporting canisters and wires. Quite rightly, the police responded in force and, after cornering the bird in an alleyway with the aid of the bomb disposal squad safely "put down" the terrorist threat. No explosives were subsequently found.

It seems likely that practical jokers rather than terrorists are responsible for this terrifying new weapon although as Sergeant Ian Freeman of Christchurch police noted: *"There's a funny side to the story, but the serious side is we've got to take all precautions."*

FOR SALE

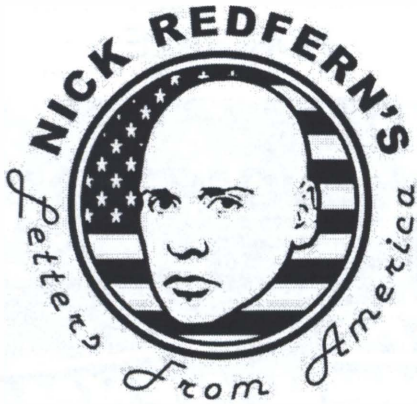


An excellent, unused board game developed by the co-founder of the official Loch Ness Visitor's Centre. Produced only once in 1987, it won awards and the highest acclaim for its fun and educational content.

£10.00 plus p&p to CFZ Members

Brian Goodwin  
1A St Georges Terrace  
Bransty  
Whitehaven  
Cumbria  
CA28 6DF

# Animals & Men #31



## CONFERENCES AND CRITTERS

The last couple of months have been busy ones. I recently met up with Rob Riggs, who is the author of the book, *In the Big Thicket: On the Trail of the Wild Man*. Published by Paraview, the book tells the story of Rob's own, personal investigation of a whole range of cryptozoological mysteries in Texas – and particularly Bigfoot and “Wild Men of the Woods”- style encounters. However, Rob's book expands into other, very welcome areas and he weaves together an intriguing scenario that links reports of Bigfoot-type creatures with a variety of other anomalous phenomena, such as UFOs, “ghost lights,” alien big cats and much more. Not only that: Rob also comes up with notable and eye-opening conclusions regarding what he believes lies behind encounters of this nature. If you've read my esteemed editor's book *The Rising of the Moon*, you'll get some idea of where Rob is coming from too.

A journalist and the former publisher of a series of award-winning community newspapers in Texas, Rob is a fascinating guy and in late May he took me out for a day to the aforementioned Big Thicket – a huge, forested area not far from my south-east Texas home. I guess many people unacquainted with Texas imagine the Lone Star State to be dominated by long stretches of desert and not much more. In some areas of the state that's true, but you might be surprised at exactly how much of southeast Texas is

covered by lush forestland. Such is the nature of the Big Thicket.

Even during daylight, the Big Thicket is an eerie location; and only minutes after pulling off the highway, you're into the depths of vast areas of forest dominated by thick trees and foliage. And it's from here that numerous encounters with ape-men, wild men and strange, spectral big cats with glowing eyes have been reported for decades.



An area of the big thicket where there have been numerous wild man encounters

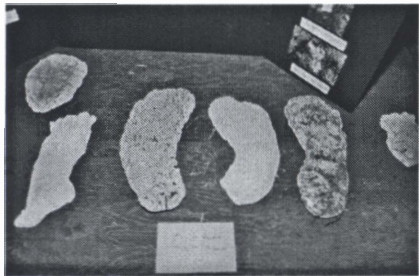
We spent several hours roaming the woods while Rob pointed out to me where some of the more prominent encounters had taken place. Rob tells me that he is working on a new book right now that expands upon his research and theories; looks like it's going to be another good one. If you haven't read *In the Big Thicket*, I'd urge you to get hold of a copy at the earliest opportunity.

A couple of weeks after chasing Wild Men around the Big Thicket, I was scheduled to speak on the subject of British Government files on cryptozoology at the *Second Annual Southern Crypto Conference* held on June 28 in Conroe, Texas. Organized by Chester Moore of [www.cryptokeeper.com](http://www.cryptokeeper.com), the event was a huge success with nearly two hundred people in attendance and the event raised enough money to help buy new equipment to allow Chester's *Team Cryptokeeper* to continue its ongoing field research.

Pix © Nick Redfern



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A display of Bigfoot prints at the  
Crypto Conference

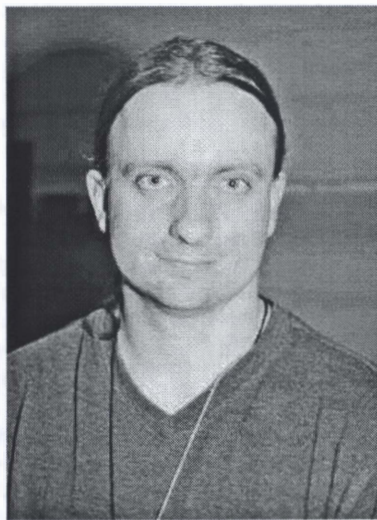
If any of you have ever met Chester you'll know that he is a great guy with a true passion and dedication for his work. A freelance outdoor journalist by profession, Chester has written for the *Texas Fish and Game* and the *Texas Parks and Wildlife* magazines and is the outdoors editor of the *Port Arthur News*. Notably, with the beginning of the upcoming school year here, Chester has arranged for five brand new displays relating the importance of conservation of hardwood bottomlands to be donated to schools in Texas. These displays will be accompanied with a curriculum created by Chester to teach children about conservation and about species such as the ivory-billed woodpecker and the red wolf.

In addition to those of myself, Chester and Rob Riggs, there were several other presentations at the conference, the most notable – in my opinion – being that of Conroe Police Department investigator Jim Chilcutt, who has spent considerable time and effort investigating potential dermal ridges, or “fingerprints of the foot”, in alleged Bigfoot tracks. “I haven’t seen anything in primates or humans that go down the side of the foot,” said Chilcutt, commenting on the fact that while human dermal ridges run horizontal, a number of castings that Chilcutt had examined displayed vertical ridges.

Also speaking was M.K. Davis, who spoke at length about the infamous 1967 Patterson film; and Chester included an awards section at the conference, which was welcomed by one and all. Smokey Crabtree of Boggy Creek fame was named *Crypto Steward of the Year* and eleven-year-old Lane Hullar was

named *Youth Cryptozoologist of the Year*. Hullar had a Bigfoot sighting last year in Romayre, northeast of Cleveland, Texas.

Right now, Chester is offering those interested a chance to take part in his *Cryptozoology Field Clinics*. This affordable package includes the following: field demonstration of track casting techniques; how to identify wildlife species and differentiate between the known and the unknown; snake identification and how to avoid being bitten; choosing the proper equipment; the setting up of motion-sensing cameras and video in a way guaranteed to secure animal photographs; and animal calling techniques and blind set-ups that will bring the animals to you.



Chester Moore

The clinic is eight hours in length and includes lunch and drinks, with the first being held on Saturday August 23 in Orange County, Texas on private property deep in the woods in an area that cryptids are known to inhabit. Chester is limiting these clinics – which will hopefully be a regular occurrence – to 10 participants at a time. As a bonus, however, those who wish to do so can go out that night in the Big Thicket National Preserve with Chester for a few hours to use night vision equipment and to call out for red wolves – and whatever else you may encounter.

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If you're interested, you can reach Chester at [bigfoot@cryptokeeper.com](mailto:bigfoot@cryptokeeper.com).

Also in attendance at the Southern Crypto Conference was a group from the *Texas Bigfoot Research Center*, including Craig Woolheater, whose 3rd annual conference has been scheduled for the weekend of October 17-19, 2003, in Jefferson, Texas. As far as lecturers are concerned, Loren Coleman will be returning to speak about his book *Bigfoot: The True Story of Apes in America*. John Kirk, a founding member of the BCSCC - the *British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club* will be speaking about his group's research on Sasquatch in British Columbia. Chester Moore will be talking about his ongoing field research of Southern Cryptids, as well as signing copies of his new book, *Boogers, Bears, Birds and Beasts: Cryptozoology in the American South*; and the TBRC will be discussing their ongoing research and investigations.

In addition, Lee Murphy will be back with his new book, *Heretofore: Unknown*, about the Honey Island Swamp Monster; Dallas Tanner will be lecturing on his latest release: *Track of the Bigfoot*; and Marc DeWerth, will be giving a presentation of his research in Ohio, as well as showing his video of a possible Bigfoot. With M. K. Davis speaking about the Honey Island Swamp Monster of Louisiana; Randy King demonstrating his interactive Bigfoot Research CD-ROM; and Kriss Stephens (paranormal investigator for MTV's show, *Fear*) discussing her investigations of the DeQuincy, Louisiana road-kill critter and her Bigfoot experience, the event should be a good one. I'll be reporting from there for the pages of *Animals & Men*. There will also be a pre-registration package that will include a catered dinner Friday night - October 17, reserved seating at the Conference and a guided tour to Fouke, Arkansas with a trip to Boggy Creek, led by Smokey Crabtree on Sunday, October 19. This package costs \$35 if received by Sept. 15, 2003, and \$40 after that date. For more details, contact Craig Woolheater at <http://www.texasbigfoot.com/prereg3.html>; and I'll see you next issue.



We have a number of new projects underway. The full list of our plans for the next three years can be found online at:

<http://www.forteanhosting.com/projects/projects.htm> We strongly suggest that you take a regular look at these pages because we are appealing for volunteers all the time.

If you are interested email Elliot Saunders [elliott@forteanhosting.com](mailto:elliott@forteanhosting.com) and he will add your name to the list of volunteers for whatever particular project has taken your fancy.

We are also in the process of compiling a wish list of equipment that we are hoping to get hold of over the next twelve months. Some of it is extraordinarily expensive others are things which might well be hidden amongst a pile of old tat in your attic.

The first of the new projects to get underway is The Shapwick Project which was started in July. One of the most important chapters in Bernard Heuvelmans's seminal work "On

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the Track of Unknown Animals", is called "There are lost worlds everywhere". In it he explains that cryptozoology is not only concerned with animals which lurk, undiscovered, in the wildest parts of the world. He pointed out that they are, indeed "living fossils" everywhere and that exciting zoological discoveries can be made right under our noses.

An excellent example of this came from our old friend, colleague and Co. Durham representative - David "Geordie Dave" Curtis. Totally by chance he told us of a type of crab - no more than five inches across - which is only found in his hometown of Seaham on Sea. When we mentioned this to Mike Hallowell - our Tyneside representative, he told us of another species of crab which is supposedly confined to one small area off South Shields.

Mark North told us of an amusing incident from Dorset folklore which gave our new project its name.

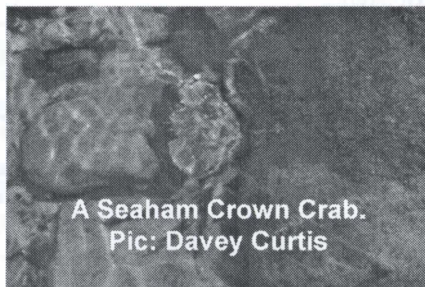
On October 12th 1706, in the parish of Shapwick, a travelling fishmonger from Poole bound for Bere Regis dropped a crab on the outskirts of the village (a farm nearby commemorates this event adeptly named "Crab Farm", which has a celebrated wind-vane showing the crab and villagers). The villagers, who had never seen a crab before and believed it was some kind of Devil or monster, armed themselves with sticks and pitchforks in attempt to drive away the creature.

The fishmonger eventually returned in search of his lost crab saw the commotion caused by the villagers. Amused by their ignorance he casually picked up the crab, put it back in his basket, and continued on his journey, spreading the word of the

dim-witted villagers of Shapwick. Since then, the villagers of Shapwick were looked upon as a bit simple and daft. That no one from the famed village dare visit a fishmonger stall at the local markets in fear of being ridiculed. Therefore, the stigma remains today - at least that is what some may like to believe.

Cryptozoologists have long bemoaned the fact that many mainstream scientists seem to disregard the testimony of native peoples. We are taking this paradigm to the next level. With the help of various benefactors including Simon Wolstencroft - the editor of Tropical Fish magazine - we are setting up a series of marine aquaria in which we hope, to keep, study, and hopefully breed some of these obscure crustaceans.

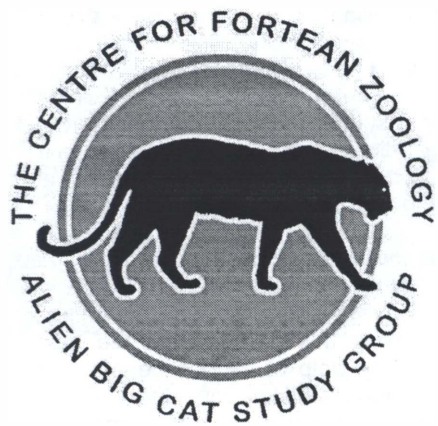
We are also launching an appeal to all CFZ personnel living in coastal areas. If there are two apparently unknown species of Crabs in the north-east of England, we believe that it would not be at all surprising if there are other species of undiscovered marine creature - known only to local fishermen who never really give them a second thought. People interested in joining in this project - either by collecting data, collating data, collecting specimens or even providing a good home for some of what - we hope will be - our burgeoning collection of unknown marine animals please email me directly.



A Seaham Crown Crab.  
Pic: Davey Curtis



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## 2003 Reports from Ayrshire by Mark Fraser

These are initial reports. Brian Murphy and I have visited most of the witnesses and scenes of sightings.

### January

Approximately 1<sup>st</sup>.  
Troon, South Ayrshire.

A resident of Teviot Avenue in Troon saw a large black cat running over the municipal golf course. Via email (no replies to the ones I sent in return).

Approximately 2<sup>nd</sup>:  
Fullerton Woods, Troon South Ayrshire.

A large black cat seen by dog walker in Fullerton Woods. The cat ran from bush feet in front of him across his path. The dog gave chase but picked up no scent.

**This gentleman was also to have a further sighting on the 11th of March about 100 yards away from this particular spot.**

4th January 2003 / Troon, South Ayrshire.

A woman who lives on Fraser Avenue, saw a large cat-like creature twice during the day from her back bedroom window, 50 feet away from her garden fence on scrubland. Behind the witnesses garden sits a railway line. beyond that a golf course which leads onto the open countryside surrounding Dundonald Hill. She describes the animal as black, five feet in length with a long tail. The witness explains:

*"After I spotted it, I got a pair of binoculars just to make sure I wasn't seeing things. It wandered about the trees and bushes for about 15 minutes and then went out of sight. It seemed to be looking for food or something but I was surprised to see it so close to the houses."*

The animal apparently returned several minutes later for a short time. The witnesses stressed to Alan Campbell of the Ayrshire Post: *"I am not mad, and I certainly have not been drinking. My neighbours have a wee black cat and that is definitely not what I saw out there."* I returned to the area a week later after initially investigating the site with Brian Murphy and *Ayrshire Post* reporters.

On this occasion I came across Max, a large black labrador.

His owner firmly believes his pet was responsible for the sighting as he says he is always out at the back of the houses and rummaging through the grass, trees and bushes.

9th January / Stewarton, East Ayrshire.

Farm workers saw a large cat-like animal on farmland, described as whippet-like. Also reports from the night previously of a gunshot, which is said to have been fired to scare off an animal?  
**Via Mark Fraser & Brian Murphy.**

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**9th January 2003 / Stewarton, East Ayrshire.**

About 0800 hours on 09/01/2003, a large black cat was seen near Stewarton. The cat, which was very muscular, looking, had a very long thick tail and was about the size of a greyhound, was lost from sight after leaping into an adjacent field and entering a wooded area. The lady was very concerned as there were a number of ponies in a nearby field and also she was aware that a large dog had been attacked and injured in the area a few weeks previously. She is to keep me informed if there is any more sightings of the cat.

**10th January / Irvine, North Ayrshire.**

More screams heard, this time from Sandy Lane in Irvine. This area has produced several reports of these screams over the last two years. Dogs also behaving irrationally. On playing several animal recordings to the witnesses they identified the puma as the sound they heard. Brian Murphy staked the lane out the night after but never came across anything unusual.

**12th January / Dalry, North Ayrshire.**

An off-duty police officer reported a 3ft high large dark coloured cat while driving in the Trinity Drive area, on the Dalry to Saltcoats Road around 2.30am. The animal ran across the road in front of him and then disappeared into nearby fields. The Scottish Executive and Police have issued a warning to all Ayrshire farmers in regards of stock kills.

**Via Mark Fraser**

**21st January 2003 / Stewarton, East Ayrshire.**

Hunter on a shoot noticed an unusual strong smell, unlike fox or other scent known to the witness, then the dogs flushed an animal from cover 10-15 feet from him and other guns, animal ran across firebreak into other cover. Described as larger than springer spaniel, smaller than German SH pointer, approx 25-30kg, grey coat, unsure of texture but not smooth, long powerful hindlimbs, no tail noticed. The beaters sent the dogs in after the animal but found no trace of it.

**22nd January / Moscow / Waterside, East Ayrshire.**

Brian Murphy came across the carcass of a sheep in a field next to the road side. He later went back to investigate a little closer, although it was dark. The animal looks to have been in the field a couple of days and been got at by scavengers. Although the original site of the kill was ten metres away up, the body had been dragged this distance uphill. There was also fleece in the small copse near the body.

## February

**4th February / Irvine, North Ayrshire.**

Residents along Long Drive on the outskirts of Irvine heard a thump during the night and thought nothing else of it. On awakening the next day they were amazed to see large prints not only over the gardens but on the roofs as well. Measurements have been taken, along with photographs.

**5th February / Irvine, North Ayrshire.**

More prints reported overnight from the householders in Irvine. By the time I managed to get there at 3pm they were still identifiable as fox prints.

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**21st February 2003 / Ayr, South Ayrshire,  
Sandyford Toll on the A77.**

Friday at 01.30 hrs. A large black cat was seen by a motorist crossing the dual carriageway and into a field, long body, squat type face, long tail maybe slightly shorter than body length with the end curled down.

**23rd February 2003 / Stewarton, East  
Ayrshire**

A large black cat seen by a parked motorist who when he turned his lights on the animal ran into fields. Size of a Labrador with a tail half the length of its body.

## April

**11th April /Troon, Fullerton Woods, South  
Ayrshire.**

A man out walking his dog on his regular track came face to face with what he describes as a leopard last night at 20.45hrs. The description of the cat is about 4ft in body length with a long upward curving tail, not quite as long as its body. Says it was twice the length of his dog.

A square, smallish head, well built or rather muscular with short stocky legs. Ran low down to the ground, very agile, much faster than his dog, which gave chase. As the chap turned a corner from the play area in Fullerton Woods onto a farmer's field, the cat was just sitting there, it soon moved off as the dog straight away gave chase. For the next half hour the dog was very excitable and would not settle. The incident was reported to the Troon police who said they would like to hear of these reports but will not investigate them. Fullerton Woods is no stranger to these kind of reports. Asked what the chap first thought

the animal was he said initially a black puma, but after going home and scouring the internet he is very positive as to what he saw was a melanistic leopard. The cat was jet-black with no markings, although it was dusk so I guess the exact colouration would not be made out perfectly. The witness expressed concern that such an animal should only be yards away from the children who were playing in the park at the time.

**Aprpx 28th: Galston, East Ayrshire.**  
Ingrid Carlton spotted a four foot long jet-black cat near her rhea pen, which seemed to be stalking.

## May

**7th May 2003 / Galston, East Ayrshire.**  
(pictures of the injuries)

A 5ft rhea (called Chris) was attacked and killed by an unknown predator some time during the night and found by its owners Steven & Ingrid Carlton the next morning. Unfortunately by the time we visited the scene the animal was long buried, although a local vet examined the carcass and is quite confident that a large cat was responsible for the kill. The animal was attacked from behind by the neck, two fang marks are visible on the 3"inch neck. The damage was clean and the vet believed rasping, instead of chewing, signs were evident. The prints found next to the body are in no doubt those belonging to a dog!

Ingrid had actually seen a very large jet-black cat around four feet in length stalking fields near the rhea pen. Several weeks earlier nine bantams mysteriously disappeared from the farm, all that was left were a couple of feathers.

The rhea would be a match for most animals, there was no blood on the birds feet suggesting that it had no time what so ever to defend itself.



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which it would have done quite easily if a fox or dog had been the attacker.

June

## Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire: June 15th, 2003

At about 2;30 this morning four 6th year pupils leaving a prom party saw a huge black cat. The boy who first saw it ran to his taxi and the taxi driver was also amazed at what they were seeing.

I'm just back from the area in Kilmarnock which joins near Galston. The ground was dry, but certainly something was seen by the 4 guys and the taxi driver.

July

## 3rd July 2003 / Ayrshire..

A sighting of a large cat near the Dreghorn roundabout. It is described as being about the height of a fully grown Labrador, jet-black, around 6ft in length which includes the tail, which was 'S' shaped at the tip. The sighting lasted only 30 seconds or so as it ran across the road in front of a startled motorist.

This is not the first sighting we have had from the area, it seems to be a spot which generates these reports fairly often. Two local residents between Springside and Dreghorn have reported hearing the screams somewhat akin to a puma!

Also four inch prints found in the snow that walked over a car.

## KENT/SUSSEX

By Neil Arnold

Inaccurate press reports claimed that only nine reports had been made of exotic cats in Sussex during 2002, whilst Kent had 92. Such bizarre claims have misled the public for a long time, considering Kent Big Cat Research, which covers much of the South-East received over seventy-five eye-witness reports from the Sussex area last year, and several hundred from Kent, with the first half of 2003 already suggesting that sightings are as expected on the increase, but will appear in the national press as extremely inaccurate, just as much of the stories are!

During early April 2003 the, This Is Brighton & Hove paper claimed that, "...police are investigating after a milkman claimed he saw a huge black panther-like cat on a street in Sussex", and that, "...he saw the mystery beast loping along Southdown Road while he was delivering during the early hours (around 3:30am)". The story also made the Daily Mirror on April 12<sup>th</sup>, with the headline, "7ft Panther at seaside", and mentioned how experts believed that, "...panthers, lynx and leopards are living wild in Sussex", despite the fact that in the U.S. the 'panther' is another name for the Cougar, yet in the UK 'black panther' is often used to describe the Black Leopard, despite the fact that the report mentioned both of these cats in one sentence! There was also the usual regurgitated theory that the animals in question were released from private collections, despite the fact that exotic cat reports from Sussex date back to the 1800s! Rather worryingly too was the statement that, "...the animals could be a danger to the public", even though there is no evidence to suggest that they are!

During the Spring of 2003 Kent Big Cat Research received two pieces of interesting

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evidence, both conclusive yet with differing solutions! A mystery skull turned up from outside Ashford, when a local shooter stumbled upon a dilapidated barn in a remote area. When he went inside the eerie premises to investigate, he picked up a skull of what he recognised as unusual and certainly unlike that of a fox. He was convinced that the remains came from a wild cat of some sort because as he put it to KBCR, *"...in all my years of being in the woods, I've never seen anything like it"*, however, upon receiving the skull, and having it analysed and confirmed by Richard Freeman, the skull turned out to be nothing more than of a badger!



On a brighter note however, KBCR also received excellent video camera footage of an extremely large Puma walking up a road during the early hours of a February morning. The witness to the large, beige-coloured cat, was just getting ready for bed when he noticed something laying in the road several hundred yards away.

He watched closely then realised that the animal was an enormous cat. He reached for his camera and filmed the animal for a few seconds as it casually strolled up the quiet, main road then turned right and disappeared behind some houses. The animal on the video shows a Cougar at least six-feet in length,

strolling up the centre of the road where the markings measure almost ten-feet in length, in an area that may seem unlikely to some sceptics, but which sits only a few miles from very heavy woodland.

This impressive film is the fifth obtained by KBCR and at least proves that four different species of cat inhabit Kent, although on the night of Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> March, at 8:45pm, a possible Golden Cat was sighted by KBCR whilst monitoring an area for several hours. Myself and another witness saw a dark shape on the horizon almost 130-hundred yards away, which casually slinked into a tree line. We then caught sight of the animal, some 80 yards away as it casually walked across a ridge in a field. It stopped, looked at us, its eyes reflected in the beam of a lamp-beam, and then loped with ease away from us. The animal was longer than a fox, low arch to the back, fawn-buff coloured, longish tail, small head, but wasn't big enough to be a Puma. For several years KBCR has toyed with the idea that the Golden Cat could explain some reports of Puma-like animals which the public have not been able to identify. Melanistic individuals are certainly possible but whether to the extent that an abundance exists in Britain, and could explain the 'smaller', 'Black Leopard' reports may be unlikely, but worth considering at least.

And finally, I would also like to add that Quentin Rose, who died last October, will be sorely missed by myself and anyone within the exotic research fold who appreciated extensive field work. He was certainly a professional researcher who for some strange reason was given a bad time by some people, simply because of his wealth of knowledge.

Quentin was there for me, and laughed at some of the methods used in today's climate, where it seems so easy for 'witnesses' to creep up on shy felids and for the press to believe them!

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## A LIFE -LONG WAIT FOR A "BIG CAT" SIGHTING ENDS by

Nigel Wright

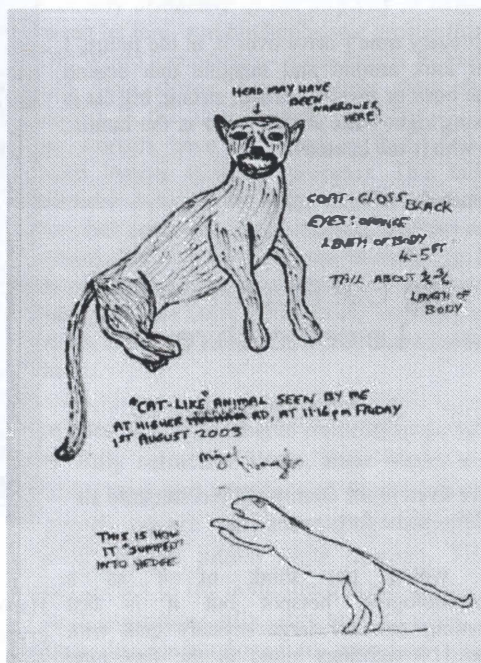
As a member of the CFZ team, I have held a secret long-term ambition - to see a truly unknown animal at close quarters. However, I did not ever really expect to fulfil this burning need. It's a bit like planning on what to do if one wins the lottery, knowing that the odds are remote that one will!

This state of affairs lasted until the night of Friday St of August this year. That night, at around 11.15 pm. I was driving home back to Exmouth. after a busy night's work at the CFZ headquarters. I had driven over Woodbury Common and then I turned into Higher Marley Road. to come down into the upper edge of Exmouth proper. Now this bit of road is both twisty and narrow, so my speed reduced to approx. 25 mph. After travelling down the road for approx. 400-500 yards, I came to a blind right-hand bend. as I went around it I noticed a large, black "Lump" right in the middle of the road!. At first, knowing the wildlife of the Common, as I do, after living in Exmouth for the last thirty years or so, I assumed that it might be a large deer that had been run over. Indeed, I had done this myself many years ago, so I stopped the car about 40-50ft from the poor creature.

My headlights were set on "dip", and the "lump" was right on the edge of the range of my headlight beams. All I could make out was that it seemed to be an animal of some sorts, because it was moving around. Then, to my great surprise, I noticed what appeared to be a very large tail; it was swinging slowly from one side to another. This was sticking out from the end facing me. I decided to switch to main beam on my headlights, to try and find out what the heck it was.

As soon as the headlight beams hit the creature, it turned the upper part of its body to face me. There, staring me right in the face. was the most frightening, yet the most beautiful sight I have ever seen. A very large Big Cat's face starred right back at me! The cat was jet black all over, and its eyes shone a bright orange. After a few moments, the cat opened it's mouth and it's ears went right back, he (or indeed she!) pushed it's head forwards towards me. and even because I had the windows shut. I could not hear anything; I could almost hear the deep, loud growl. as it's mouth opened even further.

Then it turned back away from me, and with, what I can only describe as a "slow-motion" leap. It ascended the hedge on my left, and was gone.





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I sat there, quite still, the engine of my car still running. Then the lights of a car coming up behind me, caught me eye, in the rear view mirror. I put the car into gear, and drove home. I spent the rest of the night both shaking with excitement, and wondering at the beauty of it all. As I write this, its the day after, and I'm still finding myself stopping mid-job, and thinking about that cat.

I have spent the last seven years or so. recording other person's sightings of these wonderful beasts. As yet, nothing, I repeat nothing, can really prepare you for the time when you see one for yourself.

The event has changed my frame of mind too. Now, I find myself even more determined to prove to others the existence of the wild, big cats, in our beautiful English countryside. As for Woodbury Common.

Well every time [ drive over it, in the future, I shall look around and imagine that behind some bush or tree, my proud, strong, big cat is looking right back at me! Who is the hunter, and who is the hunted?

I wonder?

## Big Cat Report from Leicestershire

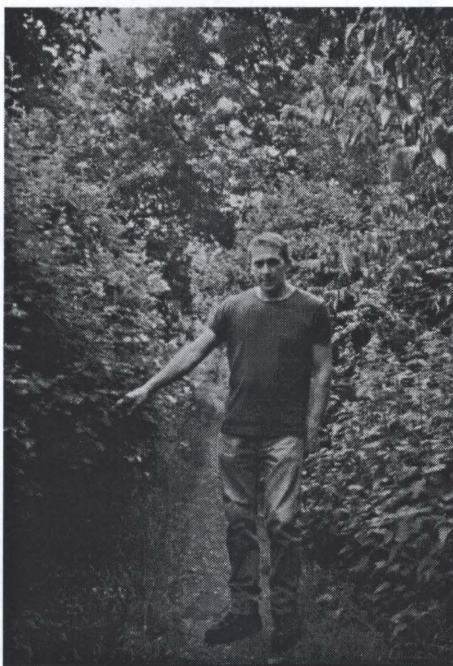
by Mike Playfair

I have lived in the county of Leicestershire all my life - some forty years.

One would not think of it as a cryptozoological hotspot but it is fast becoming one for large mystery cats with some 110 sightings alone in the first nine months of the year 2000.

On the 13th June 2002 I finally had my own sighting. I had left work at around 6 p.m. It was a pleasant day and I took my usual route home. It is a relatively short cut via the Castle Hill country park on the outskirts of Beaumont Leys.

It is a pleasant walk through some woodland and fields - great after the monotony of spending (on that particular day), twelve hours in a warehouse. Soon I was on the outskirts of my home village of Anstey. I then cut through the jetty that I usually use which (because of the recent wet weather) had become overgrown. As I walked up the incline of the path I observed a large black cat at a distance of 150 feet.



Having had a passionate interest in cryptozoology for over thirty years, my first thought was *"This just can't be real!"*

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It wasn't *that* much of a shock because I have always believed that these creatures are out there in the wild. But it *was* a shock having it happen to me.



The cat would have been about 18-20 inches high at the shoulder with a head height of about 24-25 inches. I first saw it sitting in front of me. Then it got up, looked directly at me, having heard me approaching), and then disappeared into a thick bramble bush at the side of the path.

(Editor's Note) On the previous page there is a photograph of the author indicating the spot where the cat disappeared into the undergrowth. The picture below shows the lane from where the author was standing at the time of his sighting).



Its head (which had rather pointed ears) had disappeared into the bush before I saw the end of its long, relatively thick tail.

I then had to walk directly by the bush where it had entered. When I had just passed the area in question I picked up a small stone and threw it into the bush in a vain attempt to flush the creature out. I then suddenly wondered what I would do if a big cat then rushed out at me. Which way would it go? Away from me or straight towards me? I then noticed that directly behind the bush was a six and a half foot high fence. I realised for certain that no *dog* could have jumped over it. I then quickly vacated the area.

When I arrived home I made a quick sketch of what I had observed (see left hand column). There was no way that it was a dog. I have owned a number of dogs over the years, including a bull mastiff who was very lion like in appearance, with his short muzzle and dark mask. He also had a habit of crouching down and stalking when approaching other dogs (very much like a cat might when stalking a bird), but he was always still obviously a dog. The creature that I saw that day was definitely 100% feline.

My ex girlfriend and I also have a pet cat - Edward (a fifteen year old rather sprightly thing adopted from the RSPCA), and the animal I saw dwarfed him in size.

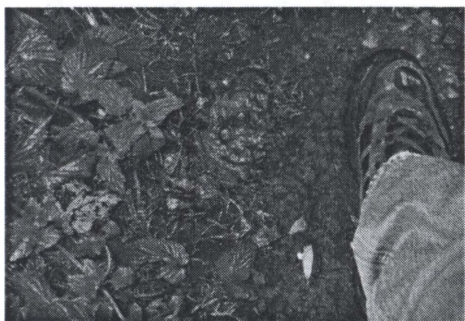
The following day I returned to the scene of my encounter. I worked out from the width of the path that the length of the cat must have been 45 inches including the tail. There had been some rain during the night and I took a picture of a possible footprint that I found further up the path.

Unfortunately it was in an area that was used often by various dog owners. Jon at first advised me to make a plaster cast but when I pointed out

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that the best of these footprints was in some dog excrement we both agreed that it was perhaps unwise to attempt to take a cast from a dog turd.

As I mentioned earlier I have had an interest in cryptozoology for over thirty years. I have exchanged letters with many of the great names of cryptozoology. I have spent many hours at monster-haunted lakes and never saw a bloody thing!



All I can say after this - my first encounter - that in the words of a hugely popular television series "The truth *is* out there" but I never thought that I would experience it so close to the comfort of my own home.

## CFZ People

### RECENT DONATIONS

Many of you were at the *Fortean Times* Unconvention this year. If so, you will be aware that our van bit the dust in a somewhat spectacular manner. Bob Rickard and David Sutton were kind enough to allow us to make an appeal for funds - not only to replace their vehicle, but to pay for the current CFZ expedition to Sumatra. We succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. There just isn't room to post a list of all our benefactors but special thanks must go to:

- \* Toby Henry, who extremely generously donated us a new laptop computer
- \* Dave Curtis, who has promised us a new PA Amplifier
- \* Paul Vella, who not only made an extremely generous cash donation but let us borrow some of his expedition equipment for Richard to take to Sumatra.
- \* Elliot Saunders, who has donated time and effort into creating the new CFZ online forum which replaces our increasingly antiquated bulletin board and then followed it up by working many hours on upgrades to our online community. He has also spent a large amount of money setting up [www.forteanhostings.com](http://www.forteanhostings.com) and another domain - [www.forteanzoology.com](http://www.forteanzoology.com) to host our planned multimedia additions to the website.

Most recently has worked long and hard with us filling in grant applications to various funding authorities in an attempt to boost CFZ funds.



# Animals & Men #31

## The late survival of *Homotherium* in Europe confirmed

Darren Naish

### Introducing sabre-tooths

Along with dinosaurs, mammoths and cavemen, sabre-toothed cats are among the most famous of all prehistoric animals. Representing a lineage of felids (the Machairodontinae) that diverged from the same ancestor as other cats round about 20 million years ago, sabre-toothed cats were a successful group that inhabited Eurasia, Africa and the Americas until as recently as 10,000 years ago. Though best characterised by the short-tailed, thickset American form *Smilodon* – best known for its huge upper canines which protruded well below its mandible – we now know that some sabre-tooths really wouldn't have looked that different from such modern cats as pumas, tigers and jaguars. Not all sabre-tooths were huge, not all were short-tailed predators of giant mammals and, perhaps most surprisingly, not all had hugely enlarged upper canines. The stereotypical view (again, based on *Smilodon*) of sabre-tooths as plain-coloured cats of open, savannah environments is also misleading given that at least some sabre-tooths were denizens of wooded environments.

Indeed recent reviews of the anatomical evidence for sabre-tooth lifestyle indicate that; firstly, living sabre-tooths were far more like modern biting cats in terms of facial anatomy than long supposed (see Antón *et al.* 1998); secondly, that sabre-tooths probably were not specialised hunters of giant mammals such as

mammoths and ground sloths but instead preyed predominantly on medium-sized hoofed mammals such as bovids, camelids and horses (see Turner & Antón 1997); and thirdly, that sabre-tooths did not practise any novel stabbing, slashing or belly-biting killing technique, but instead employed a modified form of the conventional felid throat bite (see Antón & Galobart 1999).

### Discovering the homotheres

The palaeobiology and distribution in the fossil record of one sabre-tooth genus, *Homotherium*, is the focus of our interest here. The first homothere fossils to be recognised as representing a new species of fossil cat were those described by the famous anatomist Richard Owen in 1846. We now know that Pleistocene teeth from France, described in 1824 by the great pioneer of comparative anatomy Baron George Cuvier, also belonged to *Homotherium* but had been misidentified by Cuvier as bear teeth.

The material Owen studied was discovered at Kent's Cavern in Devon by the Rev. J. McEnery, a catholic priest who lived near Torquay. Resulting from excavations initiated in 1825, McEnery's discoveries at Kent's Cavern provided the first evidence that humans had lived alongside such Pleistocene mammals as mammoths, woolly rhinos and cave lions (McEnery's work was actually published posthumously by William Pengelly, another Devonshire geologist). While we take such an idea for granted today, McEnery's conclusions were largely rejected at the time, in particular by the Rev. William Buckland.

Best known for his role in the 1824 description of the first named dinosaur, *Megalosaurus*, Buckland was both a geological lecturer and scholar and Anglican priest (he was later to become Dean of Westminster) and consequently

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he struggled to reconcile his view of a world created by God with one in which humans were just another kind of animal. Largely as a result of this view, Buckland argued that the human implements and remains discovered alongside the Pleistocene mammals by McEnery had been artificially deposited in older strata. Buckland's assertion was soon disproved by discoveries made in other English Pleistocene caves, and further work at Kent's Cavern carried out between 1865 and 1880 verified McEnery's conclusions. Needless to say, the idea that a giant sabre-tooth cat - as well as the mammoths, rhinos and so on - might have been contemporaneous with humans resulted in much public interest.

Owen referred the new Kent's Cavern species - today called *Homotherium latidens* - to *Machairodus*, a sabre-tooth genus that had been named in 1833, and it was E. Fabrini, describing material from the late Pliocene of Italy in 1890, who was first to propose the new generic name *Homotherium* (meaning 'similar beast' and chosen to reflect its similarity to *Machairodus*). Fabrini regarded his Italian material as belonging to a new species (*H. nestianus*) and he also named another new species - *Machairodus crenatidens* - in the same paper. It has since been shown that *M. crenatidens* is also a member of *Homotherium*. Further European Pleistocene species of the genus were described in the following decades and the new *Homotherium*-like genus *Epimachairodus* was named for the Hungarian species *E. hungaricus* by N. Kretzoi in 1929. However, Pleistocene mammal expert Björn Kurtén was most influential in popularising the view both that *Epimachairodus* was synonymous with *Homotherium* and that there were only two European species of this genus. He dubbed these the Greater scimitar cat (*H. sainzelli*) and the Lesser scimitar cat (*H. latidens*). The former, named (as *Machairodus sainzelli*) by Aymard in 1854 and regarded by

Kurtén as a senior synonym of Fabrini's *H. crenatidens*, was an older species with slightly larger upper canine teeth than the latter. Most recently, Turner and Antón (1997) have argued that all European homothere species from both the Pliocene and Pleistocene, as well as those named for Asian material, are synonymous with Owen's species *H. latidens*. Two east African species of *Homotherium* have also been described, *H. hadarensis* and *H. ethiopicum*, but whether they are truly distinct from *H. latidens* requires further investigation.

## American homotheres

The first American homothere species to be recognised was described in 1893 by the prolific palaeontologist/herpetologist/ichthyologist/biologist Edward Drinker Cope. Cope called this new cat *Dinobastis serus*: 'serus' means 'late' and is a reference to the relatively young age of Cope's late Pleistocene material (Cope 1893). Though a few workers still maintain the generic distinction of *Dinobastis* for at least some North American homotheres, the majority follow Kurtén's (1962) assertion that *Dinobastis* is a junior synonym of *Homotherium*, and because the spelling of the specific name had to be changed to be in keeping with the gender of the generic name, the species is now called *Homotherium serum*. Fossils of *H. serum* are found widely across North America, from Florida to the Yukon, with the most famous of its occurrences being at Freisenhahn Cave, Texas, where 33 individuals - 13 of them cubs - are found associated with the remains of more than 70 young mammoths. The mammoth body parts represented, and the marks seen on the bones, indicate that they were dismembered by adult homotheres away from the cave and then brought into the cave for the cubs to feed on (Rawn-Schatzinger 1992).

A second homothere species, Fabrini's *H. crenatidens*, is present in the Pliocene and

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Pleistocene of the USA according to those workers who support the distinction of this species from *H. latidens*. In the USA this form survived into the late Pleistocene to live alongside *H. serum* (Jefferson & Tejada-Flores 1993). Also overlooked until recently (1991) is the fact that *H. serum* is present at the famous Rancho La Brea tar pits: the specimens concerned were collected as early in 1906 yet were initially catalogued as belonging to lions or *Smilodon*. This is surprising given the long history of detailed work on the mammal fauna at Rancho La Brea. Unfortunately none of the American homothere material has been accurately dated but the youngest of it may potentially be as recent as 36,000-11,000 years old (Jefferson & Tejada-Flores 1993).

## Homothere morphology and lifestyle

Homotheres were lion-sized sabre-tooths that probably evolved from *Machairodus*, a long-lived genus that inhabited North America and Eurasia from Miocene to Pliocene times, and together *Machairodus* and *Homotherium* have been united in a machairodontine subgroup called the Homotheriini.

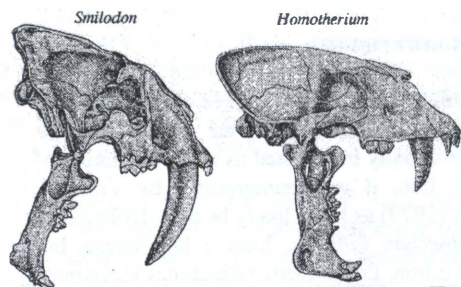


Fig. 1. The skulls of *Smilodon* and *Homotherium* compared. Note the shorter upper canines and deepened chin of the homothere. After Arribas & Palmqvist (1999).

Unlike some other sabre-tooths, the upper canines in homotheres do not protrude much beyond the ventral margin of the mandible, though this is not just because the upper canines are shorter than those of *Smilodon* and kin but also because the chin region is notably deepened (Fig. 1). The canines of these cats are serrated (though these serrations were generally lost during life due to wear) and notably flattened from side to side: consequently homotheres are often dubbed 'scimitar-toothed' or 'sword-toothed' cats.

Whereas *Machairodus* was long-tailed and proportioned much like a living pantherine cat, the proportionally elongate forelimbs and neck and short tail of *Homotherium* probably made it quite different in appearance from other sabre-tooths. The American *H. serum* would have been particularly distinctive as the disparity in length between its fore- and hindlimbs was greater than in Old World homotheres - consequently its back would have sloped down slightly from the shoulders to the hips, creating a profile which some workers have compared to that of the Spotted hyaena (*Crocota crocuta*). This tall-shouldered hyaena-like shape implies that *H. serum* had good endurance running abilities as this body shape appears to assist in cantering, a form of running that saves energy. In contrast, several features have led other workers to propose that *H. serum* was a cheetah-like sprinter.

Like cheetahs, homotheres reportedly do not have fully retractile claws, their limbs are notably long and gracile and they have an enlarged, square nasal opening allowing quicker oxygen intake while running. The visual cortex of the homothere brain appears to have been especially large and complex, a feature that is supposed to correlate with good day (rather than night) vision.



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An old idea that *Homotherium* walked in a plantigrade posture (that is, with its ankle contacting the ground) – in which case it would have looked *radically* different from any other felid, living or extinct (Fig. 2) – is based on misinterpretation of its proportionally short hindlimbs and short calcaneum (heel bone). In reality the anatomy of its feet show that it walked like other cats but its short calcaneum suggests that it had reduced jumping abilities compared to other cats.

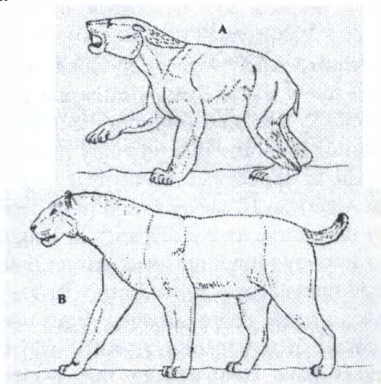


Figure 2: *Homotherium* restored. (A) As restored by Kurtén (1968): a plantigrade 'bear-cat' unlike any other felid. (B) As restored by Turner and Antón (1997): a conventional, albeit long-legged and short-tailed, felid.

It would be a surprise to many palaeontologists to learn that sightings of alleged modern-day sabre-toothed cats occur, and what's more in such far-flung locations as Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Chad (Shuker 1989), Mexico and the USA (L. Coleman, pers. comm. 2003). Various aquatic carnivorous cryptids from Africa and South America have also been suggested to be late-surviving amphibious sabre-tooths with one possible piece of evidence being a walrus-like animal depicted in a cave painting at

Brackfontein Ridge, Orange Free State (Fig. 3 – I reproduce this painting here to show that the animal depicted really looks very little like any felid imaginable). But while these cases remain unconfirmed, one remarkable piece of evidence for the late survival of sabre-tooths, well known to cryptozoologists, has recently received impressive support.

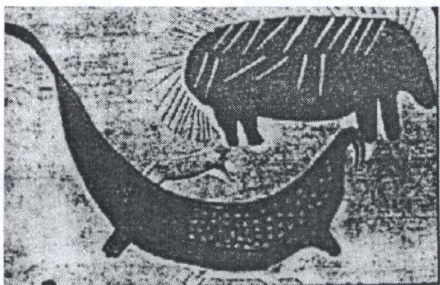


Figure Three: A cave painting from Brackfontein Ridge, Orange Free State (South Africa), depicting a tusked walrus-like animal approaching something that might be a hippo. It has been suggested that the tusked animal is an aquatic sabre-tooth but it clearly doesn't much resemble any felid.

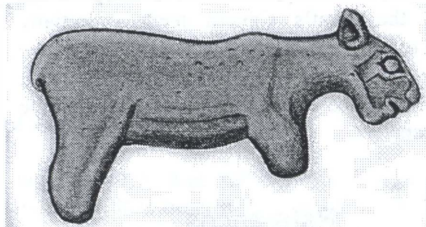
## The Isturitz statuette

In 1896, in the SW French cave of Isturitz, a 16-cm long statuette of a big cat was discovered: though initially interpreted as a representation of a cave lion, it was reinterpreted by Vratislav Mazak (1970) as more likely being a depiction of *Homotherium latidens*. Like a homothere, but unlike a lion, the statuette (which has since been lost) has a short tail and a deepened lower jaw (Fig. 4). If the statuette is meant to depict *Homotherium*, it provides us with some new information on the life appearance of this cat as it appears to be decorated with small spots and to have a pale underside. As Rousseau (1971a, 1971b) described, there are also other

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pieces of cave art that appear to depict homotheres.

The problem though is that the Isturitz statuette (and other pieces of evidence) is somewhere around 30,000 years old and the last accepted datum for skeletal material of *Homotherium* in Europe is 300,000 years BP (Adam 1961) [though see below]. This significant discrepancy therefore suggests that *Homotherium* survived in Europe for much later than thought but, given that this has until now been based on artwork, the area has remained controversial. As Shuker (1989) wrote: 'Were the above works of Palaeolithic art nothing more than inaccurate or idealized depictions of cave lions, or do they comprise genuine proof that the extraordinary scimitar cat was a contemporary of our ancestors for a far longer period of time than hitherto believed?'



**Fig. 4.** The Isturitz statuette, a representation of a large spotted felid with a short tail and notably deep chin. As argued by Mazak (1970) this almost certainly depicts *Homotherium*.

## A new young homothere record

In March 2000 the fishing vessel UK33 trawled a partial felid lower jaw from an area SE of the Brown Bank in the North Sea, an area previously known for yielding Pleistocene and Holocene fossil mammals. As described by Jelle Reumer and colleagues (2003), the jaw is from a *Homotherium latidens* and what

is especially significant is that radiocarbon analysis dates it to 28,000 years BP. As Reumer *et al.* note, this is about the same age as the Isturitz statuette and therefore confirms the long-suspected late survival of this felid in Europe.

Incidentally the climate in northern Europe at this time would have been quite harsh - the Devensian Glaciation was at its height between 25,000 and 15,000 years BP and at this time northern Britain as far south as Yorkshire was covered by an ice sheet. Cold tundra and steppe environments occurred to the south and east of this ice sheet and only cold-tolerant species could have lived in the area now occupied by the North Sea. Reindeer were living in Cambridgeshire, Polar bears in London, and Musk ox in Wiltshire. *Homotherium latidens* must also have therefore been a cold-tolerant species. Given that *Homotherium* species also dwelt in temperate and tropical environments (in Asia homotheres are known as far south as Java), this was clearly a highly adaptable, successful felid.

## The Piltdown cats

Prior to Reumer *et al.*'s discovery there were a number of British homothere fossils which were initially regarded as coming from late glacial deposits and thus being somewhere around 13,000-11,000 years BP in age (i.e., as young as the youngest possible age for the youngest American material). Most famously they include a single canine from Robin Hood Cave, the largest cave of the Creswell Crag complex at Derbyshire, discovered in 1876. Describing the tooth in 1877, William Boyd Dawkins, the pioneering geologist and expert on Palaeolithic man, suggested that it may have been introduced into the cave by humans as it appeared to bear both the marks of a flint tool and an incomplete perforation at its base. On balance though Dawkins concluded that the tooth suggested late survival of *Homotherium* in Britain. This idea

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idea has been mentioned by other workers and it led Kurtén (1968) to suggest that *H. latidens* survived in Britain for far longer than it did in mainland Europe, or in other words that Britain acted as a refugium for this disappearing species.

Incidentally, though it may have been separated from mainland Europe during one or more of the Pleistocene interglacials (namely during part of the Ipswichian Interglacial, between c. 130,000-70,000 years BP), the English Channel did not flood until c. 9000 years BP, so any homothere living in Britain between 13,000 and 11,000 years ago could still have walked to mainland Europe (Stuart 1974, Yalden 1982). It is of further interest to note that, had a hypothetical homothere population become isolated in interglacial Britain, it may only have lasted for about 1000 years before become extinct due to inbreeding. Recent modelling work on population viability in large Pleistocene carnivorans (O'Regan *et al.* 2002) has shown that even glacial refugia the size of the Iberian and Italian peninsulas were not big enough for large felids to survive in when these populations became isolated, as they did during the Pleistocene glaciations. Lack of space during these times may therefore have promoted extinction, an issue that is particularly poignant today as large carnivorans find themselves restricted to increasingly smaller islands of suitable habitat.

Returning to the Robin Hood Cave tooth, recent work indicates that Dawkins' initial suspicions were right. The fact that the tooth had been altered by humans indicates that it probably was traded and carried around by them long after its original owner had died (Charles & Jacobi 1994). Furthermore, the specimen was apparently discovered on one of the four days on which the senior archaeologist in charge of the site - Tom Heath - was absent. Consequently it is not surprising

that hoaxing has been suggested at various times and Yalden (1999) compares the Robin Hood Cave homothere to the Piltdown fossils. This remains an unproven assertion however and Kenneth Oakley's (1980) discovery that the tooth differs in its fluorine, uranium and nitrogen content from all other British homothere fossils has been used as evidence both for and against its being a hoax. Given these problems though it has been recommended that this record be ignored.

British homotheres are also known from the early Pleistocene site of Dove Holes near Buxton, Derbyshire, a site that also yielded giant hyaenas, straight-tusked elephants and southern mammoths (Dawkins 1903) but is today occupied by a municipal rubbish dump (Yalden 1999). Middle Pleistocene British homotheres are known from the cavern infill site near Westbury-sub-Mendip, Somerset (Bishop 1982). Finally, the Kent's Cavern teeth - initially thought to be late Pleistocene - come from a cave that also contains older Pleistocene fossils and it is now thought that they are also middle Pleistocene.

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# Animals & Men #31

## Sumatra Expedition Report: June/July 2003

by

Richard Freeman

The great CFZ expedition to Sumatra was not my idea. Long time CFZ Member Dr Chris Clark, an engineer by way of solar astronomy, concocted the whole thing. Chris had wanted to investigate this animal for years and decided last year to organise a trip in 2003. He graciously asked me along as a zoologist. Whilst discussing this at the 2003 Unconvention we discovered our third expedition member Jon Hare. Cambridge graduate, martial artist, and science writer he was the Mallone to Chris's Challenger and my Sumerlee.



left-right Jon Hare, Chris Clark, Richard Freeman

We contacted Debbie Martyr who was very helpful, suggesting where to look and what guides to employ.

After various misadventures the three of us ended up in Padang - the largest city in

Western Sumatra. The next day, after eight uncomfortable hours journey along roads that would not look out of place in post-war Baghdad we arrived in Sungai Penuh (full river). We checked into a grotty hotel and collapsed.

The next day we met Debbie Martyr. Debbie is a charming lady who reminded me a lot of the chimpanzee conservationist Jane Goodall. A former journalist Debbie first came to Sumatra as a travel writer in 1993. She had heard tell of orang-pendek and assumed it was a legend. Latter a guide was telling her of the animals he had seen in the jungle and mentioned casually that he had only ever seen one orang-pendek. About six weeks later Debbie herself saw the animal. She now resides in Sumatra and is head of the tiger conservation team and spends her spare time investigating orang-pendek. She told us that the most recent sighting, about 3 moths previously, had taken place in the jungle surrounding Gunung Tuju (the lake of seven peaks), a large volcanic lake in the park. She photocopied several maps for us and also spoke of a lost valley. Despite being shown on the map Debbie told us no one had ever been there. It looked like a couple of days hike from the lake. The contours showed a wickedly steep sided canyon.

*"We just don't know what's down there," Debbie said.*

We all felt that it would be exciting to look for the valley.

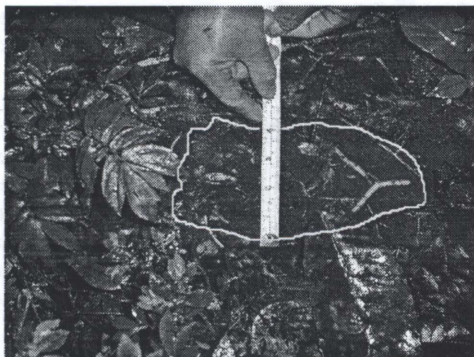
She had also arranged guides. Sahar was a small bespectacled man of about my own age (33), his brother John, and an older man called Anhur.

We stopped the night at Sahar's house. It was a tiny animal sanctuary in itself with geckos, grasshoppers, and a magnificent rhinoceros beetle. In the morning we set about buying

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supplies such as rice and noodles for the expedition and fully stocked the six of us set out into the foothills of Gunung Tuju. The foothills were fine but as the gradient grew more acute I began to suffer. Gunung Tuju is 3000 meters. Much of the way the path is at something like 75 degrees. Imagine a gargantuan winding staircase. The stairs are made of moss slick tree roots jutting at differing angles. Like the labour of Sisyphus in Greek mythology the climb seemed never ending. I collapsed with exhaustion, staggered on, collapsed again and vomited with over exertion. The other five split my backpack between them and helped me up. Even without a weight on my back the climb was the most physically draining thing I have ever done. Chris, who despite looking about 45 is in fact knocking 60, Jon, and the guides, romped up the mountain like goats.

branches and plastic sheeting Sahar led Chris, Jon, and I into the jungle.



The suspected Orang Pendek footprint (line drawn in via Adobe Photoshop)

Finally I made the summit. The land falls away dramatically to the 4 km lake. Gunung Tuju is a strange unearthly turquoise in colour. It lies in the bowl of an extinct (or maybe just dormant) volcano. Geo-thermal in nature its waters are warm. There are many legends attached to Gunung Tuju. It is said to be home to a djinn, (an Islamic daemon). Some years ago a waterspout was seen moving around the surface of the lake. Once a fisherman and his canoe were sucked down by a "whirlpool". The man managed to escape but his canoe never surfaced. The geo-thermal nature of the lake may offer an explanation here. Perhaps a release of carbon dioxide occurred, changing the water's buoyancy for a time.

The next morning we were greeted in the morning by the whoops of siamang gibbons. A greenish-tinted mountain tree shrew disported itself on a fallen tree above the fishermen's huts. The fishermen ferried us to the point on shore where we were to make camp. Whilst John and Anhur constructed a bivouac out of

Sahar's skill as a guide is astounding. The slightest bent twig or misplaced leaf catches his eye. Things that you or I would walk straight past, tell him the secrets of the jungle. He pointed out the trail of a tapir through the bushes. The bulky animal had hardly disturbed the greenery.

Later we found its three toed footprints. We came upon a possible orang-pendek footprint. Sadly it had been damaged by rain. I measured it but it was too damp for casting. It was narrower at the heel than at the front and pressed about half an inch into the ground. Further along the trail we came across seven prints crossing a large muddy puddle. Similar in size and shape to the earlier print they too had suffered rain damage.

The gait was definably that of a biped. A fallen log crossed the puddle and as Sahar pointed out a human would have crossed by the log as opposed to walking through the mud.



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Sahar by the Lake of Seven Peaks

A little further on Sahar pointed out some damaged plants. Known as pahur, the pith inside the stem is a favourite food of orang-pendek. A number of the plants seemed to have been dexterously peeled apart and the pith eaten. A flattened area of moss on a nearby tree stump may have been where the creature sat whilst eating. We hid and waited in science but apart from the calls of birds and insects nothing disturbed the stillness of the jungle.

The rains began in force and we headed back to camp. We set out on a different trail the next day. The jungle here was more open than the area we searched before. We saw many varieties of pitcher plant, known locally as the monkey's pitcher due to the belief that monkeys drink from them. Green and black leeches fell from above and attached themselves to Jon and Chris.

Several miles into the forest Sahar noticed hair stuck to a tree trunk. It was about an inch long, dark grey, and was a meter above the ground. Close by pahur plants had been stripped and their pith eaten. We also found a stick with tooth marks in it. The bite was four inches across. We collected the hair for analysis.

Jon's camera's motor broke and mine steamed up badly. Further along the trail we found more hair. It was very like the first sample but somewhat lighter in colour. It was also found on a tree trunk one metre above the ground.

The next day we took yet another path into the forest. We found more hair on this day than any other. Over 60 hairs in a hollow tree. They resembled the other hairs, short and grey. I must have lost weight rapidly. I only ate twice a day. Once before starting the day's hike and once upon return. I could only stomach a few mouthfuls of the rice and noodles.

Chris felt ill and exhausted so only Jon, the guides and myself took the next hike. We took a route up to a knife-edge peak. Jungle-swathed, sheer drops fell away from us on either side. The peaks were literally a couple of feet across. The views were exquisite. We found the pugmarks of a golden cat. I discovered the newly dead cadaver of a shrew-like lesser gymnure – a tiny jungle insectivore the size of a mouse.

In a clearing Sahar found two long brown hairs. They looked much more like what I had imagined orang-pendek hair to look like. We never made it to the infamous lost valley. It think we would have had to make an extra camp in the jungle as it would have taken more than a day's walk to get there. I hope to return to Gunung Tuju and make a special effort to get to the lost valley.

A few days later we returned to Debbie's base and I interviewed Debbie about her orang-pendek sightings.

Me: Could you please tell me how you first heard about and got interested in orang-pendek?

Debbie: I was travelling in Sumatra as a journalist in 1989. I was climbing Mount Kerinci and heard of a legendary animal that I thought

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would add a bit of colour to the travel piece I did. Then I started meeting people we claimed to have seen something that didn't appear to exist. At that stage I didn't believe or not believe, I was trained as a journalist, which is a respectable profession so I took a look into it.

Me: Can you tell me about the first time you actually saw orang-pendek?

Debbie: I saw it in the middle of September; I had been out here four months. At that time I was 90 percent certain that there was something here, that it was not just traditional stories. I thought it would be an orang-utan and that it would move like an orang-utan, not bipedally like a man. I had my own preconception of what the animal would look like if I did see it. What was the real shocker was that I had been throwing away reports on the animal on the basis of colour that didn't fit into what I thought the animal would look like. When I saw it I saw an animal that didn't look like anything in any of the books I had read, films I had seen, or zoos I had seen. It did indeed walk rather like a person and that was a shock..

Me: What did it actually look like?

Debbie: A relatively small, *immensely* strong, non-human primate. But it was very gracile, that was the odd thing. So if you looked at the animal you might say that it resembled a siamang or an agile gibbon on steroids! It doesn't look like an orang-utan. Their proportions are very different. It is built like a boxer, with immense upper body strength. But why an animal with immense upper body strength should be lumbering around on the ground I don't know. It makes no sense at all.

It was a gorgeous colour, moving bipedally and trying to avoid being seen. I knew there

was something in the vicinity because the action of birds and primates in the area meant that there was obviously something moving around. So I sent a guide around as far as I could to where the disturbance was. What ever was concealed in the undergrowth would try to avoid my guide and move away in front of him. I was concealed looking down over a small shallow valley. We didn't know what we were going to see. It could have been a bear, it could have been a tiger, it could have been a golden cat, or anything. Instead, from totally the wrong direction, a bipedal, non-human primate, walked down the path ahead. It was concentrating so hard on avoiding my guide it didn't look towards me. I had a camera in my hand at the time but I dropped it I was so shocked. It was something so new my mental synapses froze up for a minute trying to identify something I hadn't seen before.

Me: You have seen it a couple of times since. Could you tell me about those sightings?

Debbie: I saw it again about three weeks later. Again it was on Mount Tuju and again I had a camera in my hand, again I froze because I didn't know what I was seeing. It had frozen on the trail because it had heard us coming. All I could see was that something across the valley had changed. I looked through a pair of binoculars. Something didn't look quite right in the landscape. By the time I trained on the area the animal, whatever it was, had gone.

Those were the only times I could have got a photo of it. I have seen it since but fleetingly. Once you have seen an animal you can recognise it. If you have seen a rhino you can recognise a bit of a rhino.

Me: Can you tell me a bit about your theory of why orang-pendek walks bipedally?

Debbie: Everyone has pet theories. I think the only thing that makes sense is the massive

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volcanic event about fifty thousand years ago that created what is now Lake Toba up in north Sumatra. It created a biographical divide. You get the Malayan tapir down here but not up there. You get the Thomas's leaf monkey up there but not down here. In recent geological history it was the biggest volcanic event. It was absolutely immense and would have caused massive habitat destruction right across Sumatra and into Malaysia.

All I can think is that surviving animals down here would have had to become terrestrial. They would have found themselves with very few trees.

Me: But fifty thousand years is a very short time for something to change so radically.

Debbie: What you could suggest is that fifty thousand years is not a long time for something to change its muscles. Maybe there wouldn't be much skeletal change, there would be some but not a lot. But the main change would be in the muscles. An adaptable animal that is being forced to walk erect. Gibbons can walk erect so perhaps another, larger ape could become bipedal. Speciation that's what makes the most sense.

Debbie also showed us a cast of an orang-pendek footprint taken a few years previously in the jungle surrounding the lake. It was about 8 inches long and did not resemble a yeti or Sasquatch footprint. It was much less human looking.

It had four longish toes at the front and the big toe was placed further back along the side of the foot. The toes all looked more prehensile than a human's but less so than any known ape's.

Debbie then translated for Sahar as he told us of his late father's encounters with both orang-pendek and the cigau.

In the 1980s Sahar's father and a friend had been cutting logs to build a house close to where the village of Polompek now stands. The area has long since been deforested.. Both men saw a bipedal ape lifting up cut logs and throwing them about. It was covered in blackish brown hair and was about five feet tall. The hair on the creature's spine was darker. Its legs were short and its powerful arms were long. The face was broad and was black in colour with some pink markings. Both men fled.

Back when Sahar's father was a bachelor (as Sahar is the same age as me this would have made it the 1960s) he saw the cigau. Kerinci trades with other parts of Sumatra. They exchange rice for goods like silk. Sahar's father and four other men were travelling a trade route.

The path led through the jungle. One of the men had committed a great taboo. He had eaten rice straight from the pot rather than waiting for portions to be given out.

In the dead of night the cigau came from the forest to claim him. It stalked right into their camp and dragged him off into the darkness. It was smaller but stockier than a tiger. It had a silvery lion like mane and golden fur. Its forelegs were longer than its back legs like the build of a hyena. It had a short, tufted, cow like tail. The men searched the jungle frantically for their lost comrade but when they found him he was minus a stomach, disembowelled by the cigau.

It would be easy to dismiss the cigau as a piece of folklore, the wrath of the jungle sent to punish transgressors but if you recall similar attributes are given to the very real tiger. For example the tiger becoming angry with those who go naked in the forest.

Sahar's father also spoke of a cigau who laired near a fallen tree that formed a natural bridge over a river. It would swim out and devour those who slipped into the water.

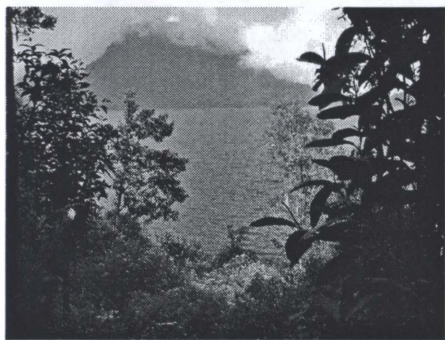


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Debbie also commented that she had many recent reports of the cigau in water. Most of them mentioned it flinging back it's mane to shake of the water.

It is worth pointing out two things at this point. Whilst on the trail of the Naga in Thailand I was told of the popular belief in a golden, lion like cat in the Thai jungles. The city of Singapore was founded after a nobleman saw a golden lion in the jungle were the city now stands. Singapore means "lion city".

The next day we caught the bus for Ulon-jourmi. From there it was a bumpy ride by motorbike to a small village and we began our trek along the mountain trail to the next area we were to study, the jungles beyond the extremely remote village of Sungi-Kuning (yellow river). The village was a two-day walk away but thankfully it was mostly down hill.



As we pushed on it became clear that Jon was unwell. He looked deathly pail and began to tremble as if struck by the palsy. He was corpse cold and clammy to the touch. He was too ill to continue and worried that he may have contracted malaria. Sahar offered to take him back to a local guesthouse and rejoin us the next day.

We had employed an extra guide, a local man who knew the area better than Sahar or Parentis. On our first trek he led us round in circles, up pointless ridges, and into dead ends. In the morass I lost my parang that I had brought back in Sungi-Penuh. Each time we paused and sat the forest floor came alive with leeches. A living carpet of vampiric annelids squirmed and looped towards you homing in on the body heat. It was an eerie sight to see them blindly tumble towards you like tiny living slinkies. Whilst you swatted them aside half a dozen more would have attached themselves to your legs from the rear and be gorging themselves on your blood. Trousers, socks, and boots proved no deterrent.

The only mammal I saw was a long tailed giant rat. Yes it may hearten Sherlock Holmes to know that the giant rat of Sumatra does exist but at about 18 inches it is more of a respectable rat than a giant one.

We began the arduous trek back. What had been all down hill going was all up hill coming back. Though not as steep as Gunung Tuju the pass when on for much further and once again I suffered. I was reduced to a staggering pace were putting one foot ahead of the other was exhausting.

We made our way back to Sungi-Penuh to pick up the things Debbie had kindly let us leave in her house. Luckily Jon turned up shortly after our arrival. Fortunately he had been wrong in his suspicions of malaria. It was food poisoning that had struck him down, but we never did work out what had disagreed with him so violently.

Finally we took the long and uneventful journey back to England were I suffered a delayed train that crawled along taking several times as long to reach Exeter as normal. After the clean, glorious public transport system in Singapore it was a total disgrace.

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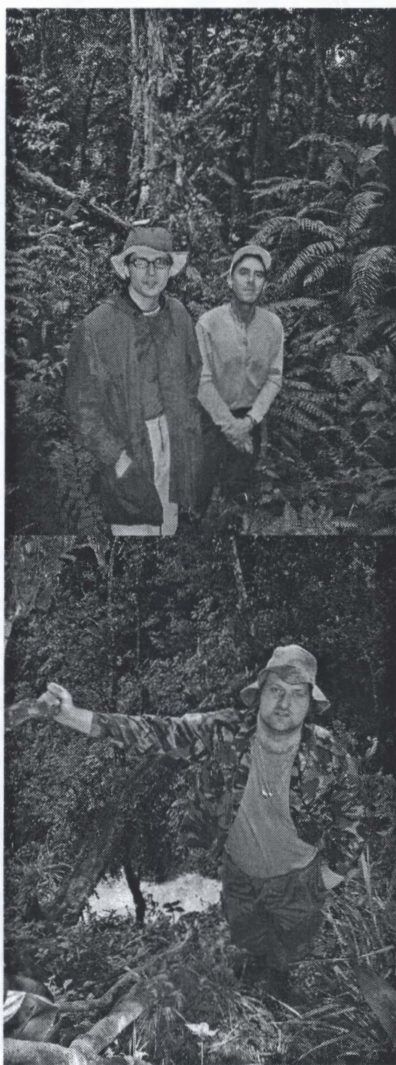
Within days of writing this the hair samples will be sent to Dr Lars Thomas of Copenhagen University for analysis. The results will be posted on the CFZ website as soon as we have them.

I believe more strongly than ever now that an upright walking primate, unknown to science inhabits Western Sumatra. I think that it is a descendent of the Miocene ape *Sivapithecus* and is related by way of the early Pleistocene *Lufengopithecus* to both *Gigantopithecus* (best candidate for the larger yeti) and the modern day orang-utans. It should be noted that similar creatures have been reported on the Malayan peninsular where they are known as *mawas*. Borneo where it is known as *batutut*, and in the valleys and foothills of the Himalayas where it is called *teh-lma* (a type of small yeti as opposed to the man sized *meh-teh* and the classic giant *duz-teh*).

The cigau may once have had a wider range. In Malaya and Indo-China legends of golden lion-like cats abound. But as far as I know there have been no recent sightings outside of Sumatra. The nearest true lions are the Asian lions of northwest India. We could postulate a creature related to the Asian golden cat (that, it should be noted has a golden coat and short tail) but far larger and more powerfully built. Intermediate in size between a leopard and a tiger. But this is merely theory.

What is certain however is that both orang-pendek and the cigau may not be around on Sumatra for much longer. Four out of the five sites where orang-pendek have been reported in western Sumatra are now deforested. I visited the remaining two and was worried by the amount of disturbance. Around Gunung Tuju litter abounded and on the road to Sungi-Rumput many people carried guns. The CFZ is

already planning a return to Sumatra sometime in the next two years with a bigger and better equipped party and try again to prove the existence of Sumatra's cryptids before the last of the wilderness is lost to loggers and poachers



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## Analysis of the Hair Samples taken at Bolam Lake

In *Animals & Men 29* we covered the CFZ expedition to Bolam Lake in Northumberland to investigate sightings of various BHM phenomena in the area. A week or so before we went Mike Hallowell (the CFZ Tyneside representative) visited the lake with a small party of his colleagues.

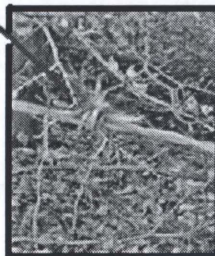
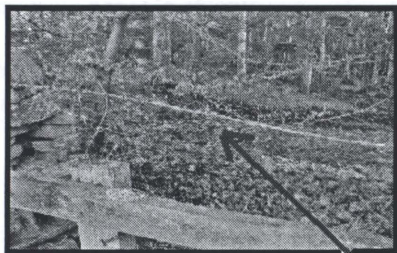
While they were there they found some matted hair caught on a barbed wire fence (see picture on the right and insert), and obtained samples. During our five-day sojourn at the lake team members obtained more hair samples from another fence.

Although we have gone on the record as stating that we find the idea of a living, breathing population of unknown higher primates (or indeed any unknown large animal) living in a country park only thirty miles away from Newcastle City Centre completely absurd, the CFZ has always operated on strictly scientific principles so we divided the available hair samples into three and dispatched them to three different academic institutions for analysis. Unfortunately the sample that we sent to Dr Lars Thomas at Copenhagen University was lost in the post.

Doubtless there will be some who will point an accusing finger at some strange para-fortean coincidence, which often seems to strike when fortean artefacts are sent in the post. Others will — no doubt — point the finger at some shadowy

Unfortunately the sample that we sent to Dr Lars Thomas at Copenhagen University was lost in the post. Doubtless there will be some who will point an accusing finger at some strange para-fortean coincidence, which often seems to strike when fortean artefacts are sent in the post. Others will — no doubt — point the finger at some shadowy government department (that has become familiar to us through *The X Files*) intent on keeping the CFZ from discovering *the truth* about the secrets of Bolam. We prefer to blame the increasingly inept British postal service and leave it at that.

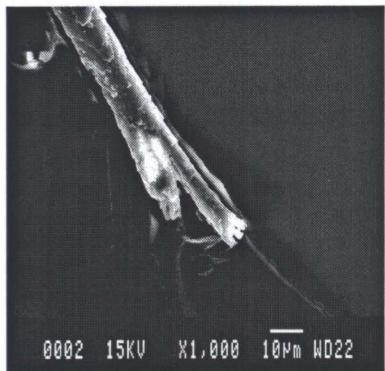
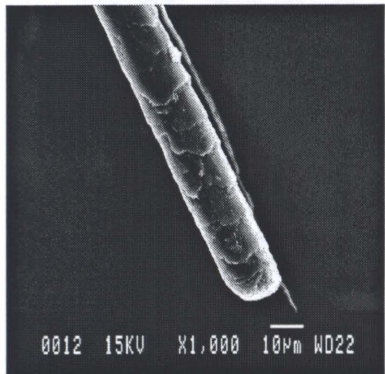
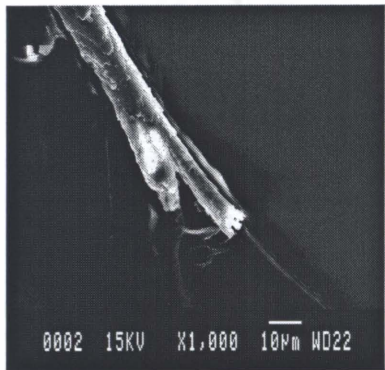
However, the samples sent to Darren Naish at the University of Portsmouth and to Chris Moiser at Plymouth College of Further Education both arrived safely, and in due course we received the analysis results. I think that it shows the high calibre of these two members of the CFZ Board of Consultants that both — upon completing analysis — telephoned us up claiming that *I don't know how to tell you this, Jon, but we can't identify these hairs. All we can tell you is that they belong to an unknown species of giant primate probably more than eight feet in height...*" before bursting out laughing and revealing the truth.





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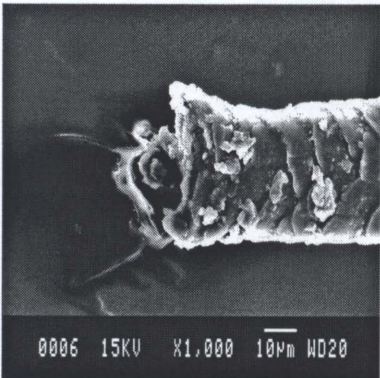
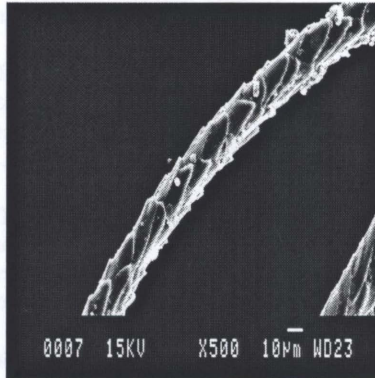
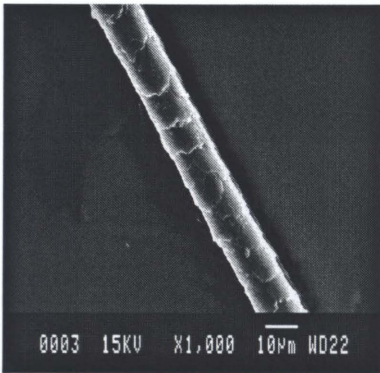
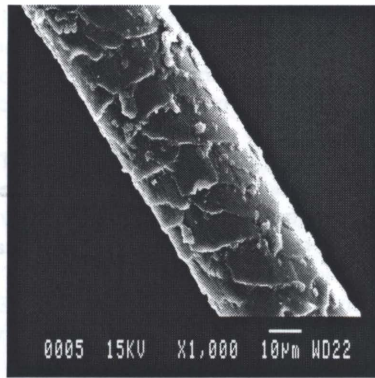
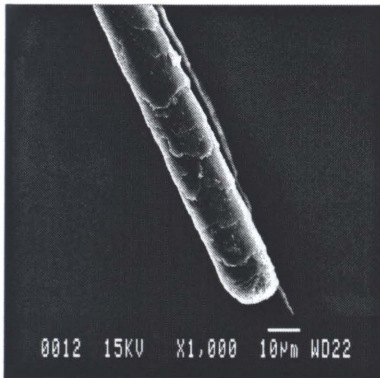
Results from the University of  
Portsmouth



## How a Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) Works

- The specimen is specially prepared. It must be coated with something to make it conduct electricity—such as a thin layer of gold—to activate the electrons.
- The prepared object is placed in the bottom of a special column that creates a vacuum when all the air is pumped out. At the top of the column is the “gun” that shoots out electrons. Inside the column are lenses that focus the electrons on the specimen.
- Above the specimen, scanning coils move the electron beam back and forth across the entire object.
- When the beam moves across the specimen, it knocks other electrons off. The movements of these electrons are recorded and enhanced. The microscope is able to create a picture of the specimen based on the way the electrons bounce off it. The picture appears on a monitor. What you see when you look through a light microscope is a magnified image made from light reflecting off an object. In the case of a SEM, you do not see light but the activity of the electrons.

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The samples were prepared by Robert Loveridge (a technician at the University of Portsmouth), to whom we owe a debt of thanks. He provided a CD containing some thirty images, eight of which are reproduced above.

Hair analysis is difficult if you're not experienced in it because it is based mostly on comparison. You need a large comparative sample if you're faced with identifying a new specimen. Within a limited dataset, I felt that I was able to eliminate rabbits, rodents, deer, horses, and humans. The best matches to the Bolam Lake sample were carnivorans of the cat and dog groups. Based on the scale size and distance between the scales, I felt

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that a dog was the most likely identity. Here I would like to stress that by dog I mean a member of the Canidae rather than specifically a domestic dog. Three kinds of hairs appeared to be represented - coarse guard hairs; fine hairs from the undercoat; and a third kind that I couldn't work out where they belonged on the body. A peculiarity of the hairs was that many of them were covered in a fine powder of some kind, which I assumed to represent flakes of epidermis (dandruff). These flakes can be particularly seen on the final two pictures reproduced on the previous page. I didn't see these on other hair samples in my collection all of which had been taken from live animals. My tentative conclusion therefore is that these hair samples came from the decomposing corpse of either a domestic dog or a fox.

## Results from the Plymouth College of Further Education

Report on Hair Sample examined on 20.03.03

### Preamble.

This hair sample was submitted for examination with a request dated 19.02.03 from the Centre for Forensic Zoology. The letter stated that it had been found in the area of Bolam Lake in the vicinity of a BHM sighting. The hair sample was contained in a small sequestrin sample tube containing nine hairs and a small amount of lichen that had overgrown the hair.

### Technique.

The hair was measured and viewed with a hand lens. All hairs were in the range of 5-6cm long. Temporary preparations were then made of two hairs and examined at x100 and x400 using a Meiji standard microscope. The following was observed:

1. No hair bulb (root) structure was present although there was slight bifurcation of the hairs at one end. This suggests that the hairs were plucked sometime prior to being collected.

2. The hairs both tapered to a fine point at the other end to the bifurcation. This suggests that they were not cut at any time during their growth but at a natural length.

3. Each hair was measured and found to be 29  $\mu\text{m}$  wide  $\pm 2 \mu\text{m}$ .

4. Even without staining, there was a clearly defined differentiation into cortex and medulla.

5. The scale patterns of the cortex and the structure of the medulla were clearly visible when finely focussed. The medulla was ladder-like.

6. The slides were compared with details and pictures in *Guide to the Identification of Animal Fibres* by H.M.Appleward (Wool Industries Research Association, Leeds. 1960).

7. Gross examination revealed the hairs to be two coloured i.e. a dark colour at the top half of the hair and colourless at the lower half.

### Conclusion.

The appearance of the hair is consistent with that of a cat. It cannot be definitely be said to be a cat with this worker's knowledge in the area. It is, however, not hominid in origin. The presence of lichen over some of the hair would suggest that it had been in situ where it was collected for some time.

Report prepared by:

C.M.Moiser BSc., LLB (hons), FZS



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## The "Beast" of Walsall

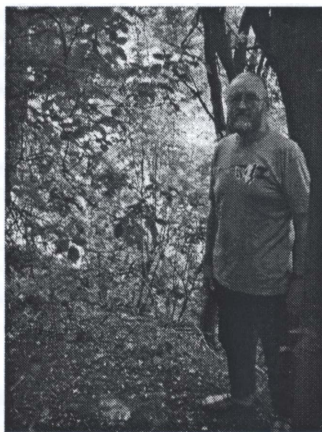
by Jonathan Downes

Many of you will be aware that I write a column for Koi Carp magazine. It is called "Kurious Koi", and records the stranger side of koi keeping. In my pursuit of strange koi carp stories I have made several friends within the koi keeper community and I regularly, receive emails giving me interesting little snippets. In recent months I have received a number of accounts of sightings of strange creatures which have — allegedly at least — been attacking koi carp in garden ponds.

The most recent came from a story in a west Midlands newspaper which told the sad tale of Janet and John Newell of Walsall who complained that their prized collection of fish were being systematically snaffled up by a hungry and mysterious creature which makes raids from a nearby canal bank. Over a number of occasions in mid July this year something has been raiding their garden and dozens of comets, goldfish and koi carp have been eaten by the animal, which Janet and John believe may be an otter. One 24-inch koi carp, which the Newells had bought as a baby but was now worth £300 alone, was butchered and eaten. The couple, of Sutton Road, Walsall, watched in horror as the creature dived into the pond, seized the fish and made off with it. According to the original account the fish then became caught in a hole in the garden fence and the animal kept coming back to take the occasional nibble.

*"Up until then we had not seen the creature although we knew something was taking the fish and eating them," said 56-year-old Mrs Newell. "We had assumed it was a feral cat but it was brown and cream in colour with very short legs and from what I have seen on television it looked like an otter. But we have been told that otters do not breed in or inhabit urban areas like this so what it actually is remains a mystery."*

Their house backs on to a stretch of the Birmingham Canal and it is thought the mystery creature may have made its way down towards their home from the Park Lime Pits at Rushall. Officials from both the town's Countryside Rangers group and from British Waterways believe a mink may have been to blame for the slaughter but Mrs. Newell was so adamant in maintaining that the animal was an Otter that we felt that we had to investigate for ourselves. *"They have not seen the creature and are going on educated guesswork,"* she said. They even managed to film the creature and in late July when the CFZ were at Cannock investigating accounts of an o.o.p crocodile they were awaiting confirmation that, although they have been unlucky enough to lose a whole collection of their prized fishes, that they are lucky enough to have seen one of the few specimens of this rare and beautiful mammal that is beginning to recolonise the country.

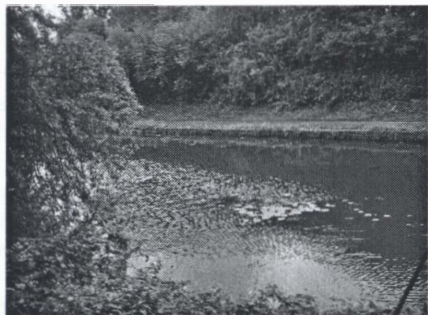


Mr Newell shows us the bank leading from his garden down to the canal

We tracked down the Newell's who by this time were heartily sick of the whole affair. They had been vilified and treated like idiots by the press and pretty well everyone else involved. With a defensive and slightly wary air Mr Newell showed us the long, steep bank behind his house which leads down to the canal. The last time I had visited this stretch of the canal (nearly 20 years ago), it was a complete mess and somewhat reminiscent of an open sewer. Now it is a haven for

# Animals & Men #31

water birds and fish and is carpeted by great, yellow, water lilies.



He showed us the gap in his fencing where the body of his big koi had been wedged and where the mystery beast came back day after day to feed. He showed us the well-kept koi pond in the corner of his pretty little garden — an oasis for wildlife in the middle of a grey and slightly dull city, and finally he showed us the video he had taken. It showed... an otter.

It was unmistakable. For the first time in well over a century otters had recolonised that part of Staffordshire. We watched the five-minute film over again. We were overawed to see something so beautiful and graceful in the middle of the city. We took our photographs, shook Mr Newell's hand and left. The mystery was solved.



## Unknown Primate in Guyana

Our Hon. Life-President Cot. John Blashford-Snell recently sent us copies of some recent correspondence of his relating to an unknown species of monkey from Guyana. In June 2002 he wrote to Dr Anthony Rylands of the Centre for Applied Bio-Diversity Science in Washington telling him about:

"...a large animal that to my inexperienced eye looked like a buff/pale yellow coloured adult woolly monkey with a brown dorsal stripe from the nape of its neck to its tail'.

He went on to say that their mutual friend Jeremy Mallinson (of Jersey Zoo and the Durrell Wildlife Preservation Trust), thought that it might have been *Lagothrix lagothricha* - the woolly monkey.



*Lagothrix lagothricha* the woolly monkey.

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He continued:

'Several of our party watched the creature for approximately five seconds as it climbed a tall tree. There were other monkeys in the trees, making a fair amount of noise, but this was the only one we saw clearly. Alas we did not get a photograph'.

Dr Rylands replied on the 15th June:

"Must admit it has got me flummoxed. The only primates recorded from Guyana to date (and for a long time) are:

- The golden handed tamarin (*Saguinus midas*),
- The squirrel monkey (*Saimiri sciureus*),
- The brown tufted capuchin (*Cebus apella*),
- The weeper or wedge-capped capuchin (*Cebus olivaceus*),
- The white faced saki (*Pithecia pithecia*),
- The bearded saki (*Chiropotes satanas*),
- The red howler (*Alouatta aurata* formerly *seniculus*)
- The black spider monkey (*Ateles paniscus*).

None of these come close to your description - except (perhaps) the weeper capuchin - which is a buffy grey (very variable) - and fairly large (2.5-3.0 kg) (more gracile than the then the more robust tufted capuchin).

The key to that species is the black cap in the form of wedge (the thin end on the forehead).

Red howler monkeys from the Rupununi are reportedly (variably) quite black (Ivan Sariderson in the 1940s reported all black red howlers) - but this has yet to be documented properly.



Weeper Capuchin

If the tail was bushy - then it might have been a female (buffy but quite dark brown) white-faced saki (the males are black with a white face) - but nowhere near to a woolly monkey (very shy monkeys - much vertical clinging and leaping).

So I am afraid that I am not much help - perhaps next time an Indian may be prepared to obtain a specimen - without a skin and skull it will always be a mystery - unless a good photo identifies it as one of the known species.

Woolly monkeys are reported from the west of the Rio Branco (Rio Demini). Adrian Barnett insisted recently that he saw the white-fronted capuchin, *Cebus albifrons* on the Potaro plateau - also a long way from its known range - west of the Rio Branco."

The Colonel replied to Dr Rylands on the 30th June this year, writing:

"We shall keep our eyes open for another sighting of the strange "woolly" monkey with the dorsal stripe when we are back in the area later this year. If I can get a photograph or any other information I'll let you have it".

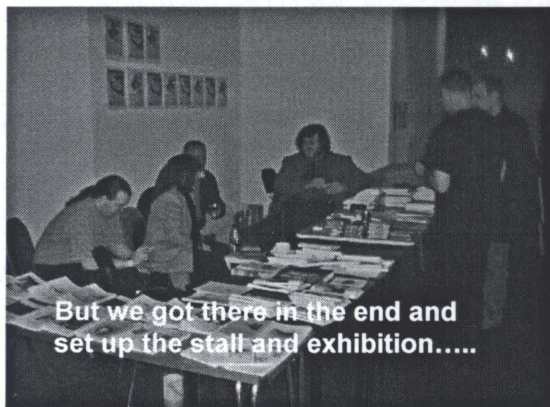
So there - for the moment at least - the matter rests. We will print more news as we get it.



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LEFT: Graham, Mark North and Richard looking highly disgruntled in the back of the tow truck



But we got there in the end and set up the stall and exhibition.....

At first it all looked as if it was going to end in tears! The CFZ posse were on their way down to London for the Uncon when their (not so) trusty van committed hara-kiri and had to be towed via breakdown truck for most of the way....



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Jon Hare and Wolfgang Schmidt in the Chinese Restaurant on the Saturday night. Having showed his *ahem* aptitude for CFZ life we had to pick him for the Sumatra expedition



Jon and Richard brought the house down with their presentation on the Saturday, and over the weekend we got over fifty new members and raised over £2,000 – which paid for Richard to go to Sumatra! Even though we still drink claret on stage, we must be doing *something* right!

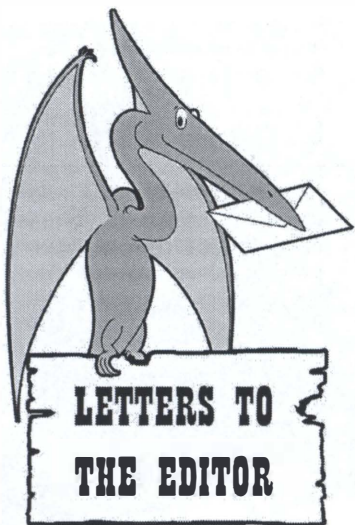
It was our ninth Unconvention and – for us at least – it was our best yet!



Pix by Graham, Helen, and Davey C



# Animals & Men #31



The Editor and his band of merry men welcome an exchange of correspondence on any subject of interest to readers of this magazine. We reserve the right to edit letters and would like to stress that opinions voiced are those of the individual correspondent rather than being necessarily those of the editorial team or the Centre for Fortean Zoology. Every attempt is made not to infringe anyone's moral rights or copyright, and we apologise if we have unwittingly done so.

## NAUGHTY MIRANDA

Dear A&M

There used to be a time when the BBC's ability to produce good science documentaries was highly respected: they generally portrayed a balanced view of the subject, had their facts straight, and were careful not to cast ideas, or scientists themselves, in an inappropriate light. Alas, those days are long gone, as viewing of any Horizon documentary made within the last five years will show. Formulaic and predictable, they invariably focus on 'straw man' ideas (not believed in by any of the people who work in the respective field) before introducing a

'maverick' who comes along and allegedly overturns everything. Remember this formula next time you watch a BBC documentary. Of course, things in science generally don't work that way but it makes good TV. Many documentaries also come across as fake 'docu-dramas' consisting of self-indulgent TV theatre, much of which is completely irrelevant. Then again, it might also make fun TV for the masses and I suppose this is what they are aiming for. The BBC's Loch Ness documentary shown on Sunday July 27th was no exception, though let me say that I like Steve Leonard and enjoy watching his stuff. Overall the programme's conclusion - that there is no Loch Ness monster (viz, an unknown living species of large animal) is defensible and they should be commended for avoiding the usual caveat at the end that, despite all their work, there might still be something lurking out there. But the following things are what really bothered me.

### What plesiosaurs don't look like

Firstly, the programme featured copious Computer Graphic footage of an animal alleged to be a plesiosaur. Sorry, but it was completely unrealistic, thoroughly ugly and unlike any plesiosaur known from fossils. It had stiff diamond-shaped paddles, large plate-like scutes covering its body, and an overall skeletal look, even with the neural spines of its vertebrae projecting along its back. No plesiosaur looked like this. Fossil evidence indicates that they were sleek, streamlined animals with skin that probably looked smooth from a short distance away. Their paddles were wing-shaped with a somewhat flexible trailing edge: they were not diamond shaped. I think the CG plesiosaur was given these flippers to match the images in the Rines-Egerton photo. MORE IMPORTANTLY, right from the outset the programme made the assumption that, if there is a Loch Ness monster, then it's a plesiosaur. They did not suggest or even imply that other identities have been suggested, and by going for the plesiosaur identity they mischaracterised the ideas of many people who have investigated the Loch Ness phenomenon.

### The irrelevance of crocodiles

Leonard asked what kind of modern animal might resemble (in ecological terms) a plesiosaur. Though



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there is no exact extant analogue, the correct answer would be a marine mammal of some sort (plesiosaurs can be imagined as combining uniqueness with features of otariid pinnipeds, turtles and crocodilians). But no, Leonard chose.. Indopacific crocodiles.

Basically this was a 15-minute excuse for Leonard, Adam Britton (an extremely respected crocodile biologist who I think very highly of) and a team of helpers to play around with a big crocodile. Steve Salisbury (another extremely respected crocodile worker - his recent PhD is frighteningly impressive work on the self carrying system of fossil and living crocodilians) - Started things off by pointing to superficial similarities seen in plesiosaur and crocodile skulls.

Ok. Leonard went from there and, stating that a plesiosaur bite could have resembled that of an Indopacific crocodile, proceeded to measure a crocodile's bite force with a pressure hose. Very interesting, yes crocodiles have an awesome bite force. Relevance to plesiosaurs? Very little. After the playing around with the crocodile bit, they briefly went back to Salisbury: though it wasn't explained at length, if you listened carefully he quickly stated profound differences seen between crocodile and plesiosaur skulls. Though plesiosaurs (short-necked plesiosaurs with superficially crocodile-like skulls) may well have some functional similarities with crocodiles, things are clearly different if you're thinking of long-necked plesiosaurs like *Plesiosaurus*, *cryptoclidids* and *elasmosaurids*. These animals fundamentally lack the features associated with the power biting of big crocodilians. Their skulls indicate instead relatively weak snapping bites - i.e., ideal for catching fish, crustaceans etc, but not for grabbing people, water buffalo or antelopes as Leonard implied. So, while all of this was nice TV theatre of the sort we now expect from the BBC, it was a waste of time and nothing to do with Loch Ness.

## Turtles, gigantothermy and icebergs

When wondering if a hypothetical plesiosaur could survive in waters as cold of those of Loch Ness, Leonard pointed both to leatherbacks and to

Australian fossil sites yielding apparently cold water plesiosaurs. Leatherbacks really can swim in cold boreal seas, but despite initial results from Paladino *et al.* (1990) they are no longer thought to have a resting metabolic rate elevated compared to that of similar-sized reptiles. In other words they are bradymetabolic.

However, they are endotherms and have a bunch of features that allow them to be cold tolerant including an insulative carapace, a thick, oil-saturated skin, fibrous fatty tissue and countercurrent heat exchange mechanisms in the flippers. The presence or absence of all of these things can be determined from fossils and there are enough good plesiosaur fossils (including at least one good specimen with skin impressions - my info on it is from Arthur Cruickshank, an expert on plesiosaur anatomy) for us to be confident that these things were absent in plesiosaurs. The bone microtexture and histology of plesiosaurs is not consistent with endothermy - they appear to have been 'traditional' reptiles. So the only getout for having them as cold tolerant is to argue that they were gigantotherms.

Problem: the entire theory of gigantothermy is based on Paladino *et al.*'s erroneous data on leatherbacks, and it has since been retracted by these authors. Given that other studies do not show leatherbacks to have an elevated metabolic rate (Lutcavage *et al.* 1990), the theory of gigantothermy has died a death and there is no evidence that giant bradymetabolic vertebrates converge in physiology with giant tachymetabolic ones. Even if gigantothermy were a viable theory, in marine reptiles it is only theoretically possible with the suite of features cited above. Indeed Orenstein (2001) writes '*Gigantothermy ... would not be enough to keep a leatherback warm in cold northern waters*' (p. 134). At the moment the idea that plesiosaurs may have been cold tolerant is not based on any good evidence.

As for the evidence showing that some Cretaceous plesiosaurs inhabited cold waters with icebergs etc, this is controversial: the Cretaceous poles were no where near as cold as the modern ones and the evidence that the Australian sites they referred to were frequented by icebergs rests on the presence of drop stones - rocks that are alien to the local sedimentary geology and which appear to have been carried to their new home by ice. The problem is that

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icebergs are not the only way in which drop stones get dropped. Stones and rocks can also be carried for miles and miles in the roots of floating trees and as seaweed holdfasts.

## Believing is seeing

The programme ended with another TV theatre section on human perception. Basically, people are poor observers and what we perceive is not necessarily the same as what we see. Fair enough, as discussed here before there are many studies, which support this view. To demonstrate it, Leonard set up a fence post in the loch, which could be raised and lowered by the pull of a rope. A group of tourists were looking out over the loch when - shpling - up popped the fence post, and - shplop - down it went. They were then asked to sketch what they'd drawn. The results? incredibly unimpressive. No one had enough imagination to draw a drooling toothy elasmosaur with flippers, shining eyes and steam coming from its mouth and nostrils, everyone had instead drawn, a fence post. One person did however give the top of the fence post a sort of flipper shape to it, and another imagined that she'd seen humps beneath the water surface. But overall it did not demonstrate the point.

## An improbable conclusion

Leonard's final point was that people 'see' a Loch Ness monster because they have been led to think that any unexplained object seen in the loch is a Nessie. But that's where it ended - he concluded that people weren't seeing anything: it was all imagination. No mention of the far more likely (IMHO) scenario that people are in fact seeing a whole wealth of different things, but misinterpreting them as monsters because of their preconceptions or poor observational skills / naivety. Things like water birds, swimming deer, seals, wave and wake effects etc. These things for me are 'Loch Ness monsters': people *do* see the Loch Ness monster, but they are not seeing a giant unknown survivor from prehistory.

Some months ago I spent the better part of a day with one of the BBC researchers responsible for this documentary. He wasn't in the credits, so I wasn't surprised that I wasn't either, but it did strike me

that what he spoke about all those months ago was very similar to the final product. Stated another way: it seems that many documentary makers know what they are going to show and what they are going to find even before they've started filming. So when you see a documentary that claims to be objective and scientific in its approach, you are instead seeing a carefully orchestrated, theatrical piece of popular entertainment that cannot claim to be authoritative or objective.

Darren Naish

## FRANK PELTER'S SEX CHANGE CHICKEN

Jon

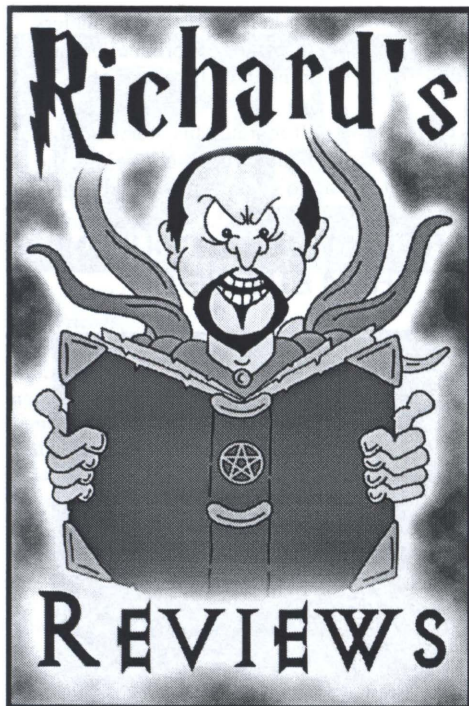
Firstly, I thoroughly enjoyed your lecture at the UnConvention, entertaining but at the same time very informative. I live in a town about fifteen minutes away from Loftus/Skinningrove where the wallabies were beheaded. Your description of the town and the locals was uncanny. When I returned home last night I was talking to my girlfriend's mum who knows people who live in Skinningrove. I mentioned the details of your lecture and your conclusion. She immediately told me that it was wrong. I asked her why it was wrong and she told me that there is a lad who lives in Carlin How (the next village from Skinningrove) who is a smackhead. Not unusual in those parts it must be said, there are rather a lot, the council gives them houses out in the sticks to keep them away from people. This particular smackhead is known in the area for being a violent and particularly nasty piece of work. The lady said that it was fairly common knowledge in East Cleveland that this particular lad had hacked the heads off the wallabies "for fun." I asked her if perhaps that was just a rumour because of his previous violent behaviour (the fact he was a smackhead carries little stigma in East Cleveland). She was certain it was not, in fact she knows his Mum (rather distantly now) who won't have anything to do with the lad as a result of the attack.

This story doesn't prove anything of course but

apparently it is common knowledge in the relevant part of Cleveland

Andrew Stogdale

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*Mysterious Creatures  
A Guide to Cryptozoology*  
(two Volumes)

by George M Eberhart  
(ABC CLIO) ISBN 1-57607-283-5 £142.77

I have been writing reviews in *Animals & Men* for over five years now. I have never stopped to count up all the books I have read. Most have been fairly good, a few have been trash, and a few have been excellent. But I have just finished a book that I can say without hyperbole is the finest tome on cryptozoology since *On the Track of Unknown Animals*.

I had never heard of George M Eberhart and had no idea who he was (and still know next to nothing about him). I was expecting a hack writer to have cobbled together an ill researched pile of excrement like those legion of "mystery" books that sprang up like fungi in the wake of the massively over-rated X-

*Files*. A book that re-works other people's writings and is full of annoying errors I have seldom been more wrong.

Eberhart's massive (722 page), two volume, *magnum opus* is stunning. After an introduction to the subject and some interesting essays on native and western eyewitness testimony the book lists over 1100 cryptids in alphabetical order. From Abnauaya (a wildman of western Asia) to Ziz, a giant Middle Eastern bird.

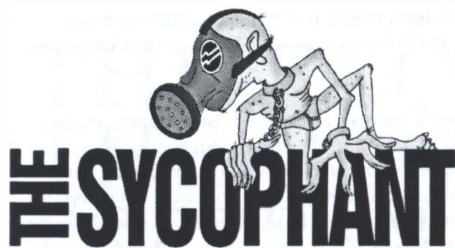
Each entry lists the derivation of the creature's name, its alternate names, its physical description, its behaviour, its distribution, and then lists some significant sightings. After this the animal's present status is discussed then possible explanations are listed. Eberhart doesn't list the various explanations in order of merit nor does he generally comment on them. He lists all the possible explanations known to him and lets the reader decide which, if any, make the most sense.

The sheer amount of research that must have gone into this impressive book is simply staggering. The amount of books, journals, and magazines that he must have consulted must be enough to fill a small library. The mind boggles at the amount of work involved. Eberhart writes clearly and concisely (in depth investigations of each of the 1100 + entries would make this impossible). He is neither overly technical nor condescending. Hence either the experienced cryptozoologist or someone who has never heard of the science could read the book with enjoyment.

Even "old lags" of cryptozoology will stumble across creatures new to them of even more satisfyingly will find details of frustratingly vague reports that have been given only the briefest mention elsewhere. For example I had heard whispers of gigantic, nags-like, crested snakes reported in 20th century Algeria and Tunisia. Never could I find any details until I read the passage on the Saharan crested snake in *Mysterious Creatures*. Some hard liners will balk at the inclusion of "mythical animals" but as Eberhart quite rightly points out these legendary beasts are almost certainly based on embellished accounts of real beasts unknown to science. Despite the high price this is a book which every cryptozoologist and every fortune teller should own.



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Deep in a cave beneath Loch Ness lives a strange figure who steals ideas from other magazines and then somehow makes them his own.

He keeps a jaundiced weather eye on the world of Fortean Zoology and occasionally emerges into the world of men to pour ridicule upon his unsuspecting victims...

## INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE AT THE CFZ.....

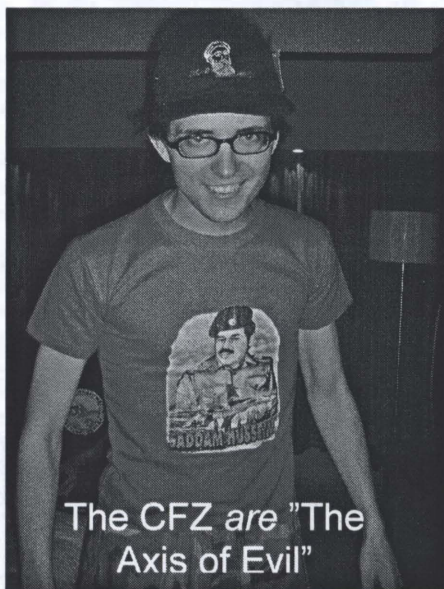


Richard is still sulking because Jon D wouldn't reimburse him for one of the invoices from his Sumatra trip out of CFZ funds. He claims that he spent an entire night

interviewing the young lady above about matters appertaining to higher primate reproduction and should therefore be reimbursed for his troubles.

JonH (see below) corroborates his story, adding that they made so much noise during the interview that he had to go and sleep in the bath!

## GEORGE BUSH COULDN'T NAME THEM BUT WE DO.....

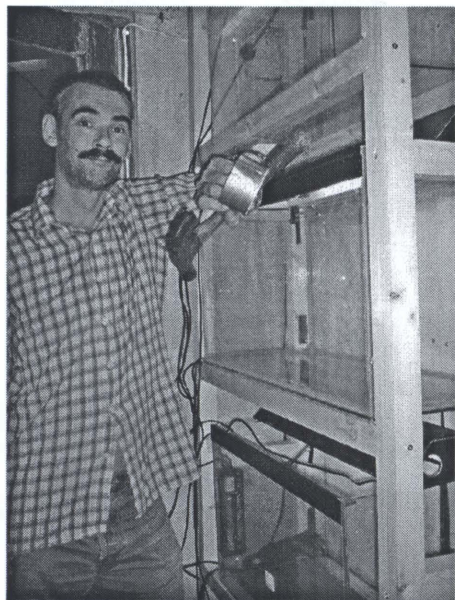


## ...AND THAT'S OFFICIAL!

I think that it says something about the members of the CFZ when one discovers that although they had been visiting an area renowned for charming and beautiful native folk curios and *objects d'art* they brought back a selection of other – ahem – souvenirs of their sojourn in Indonesia.

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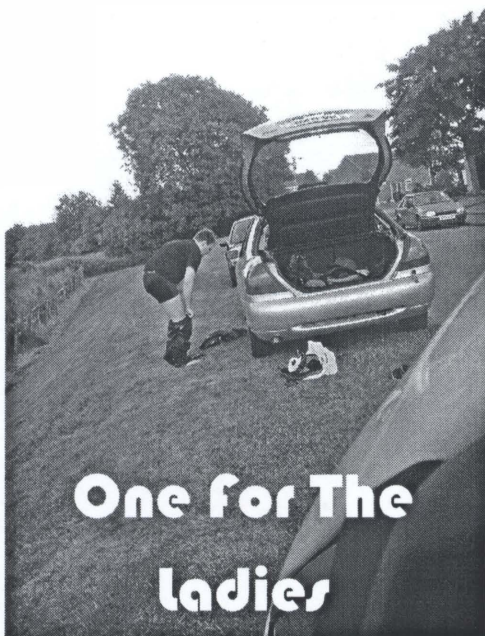
Here Jon Hare – obviously doing his best to become the next male supermodel – is showing off his exquisite dress sense by wearing an Osama Bin Laden baseball cap and a T-Shirt emblazoned with the visage of Saddam Hussein.



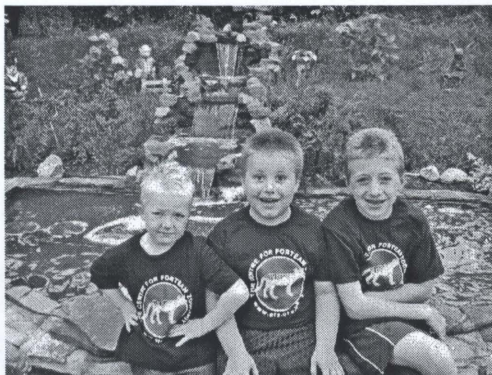
The rumours that Graham (above) is currently hard at work building a bunker for strategic weapons of mass destruction *rather* than a new reptile room for the CFZ menagerie are, therefore completely unfounded.

We challenge any authorities who wish to send in weapons inspectors to do so. On the basis of their past track record they won't find anything anyway.

Next – as a special favour to Nigel's wife, sad pictorial proof that the CFZ really need mobile changing rooms next time Mark Martin is doing any field operations involving the increasingly leaky CFZ boat.



## CFZ – The Next Generation



Jon's godson and his brothers herald the imminent launch of *The Thylacine Pups* – the junior branch of the CFZ. Claims from Tim Matthews that they will be called *The Downes Youth* are stringently denied.



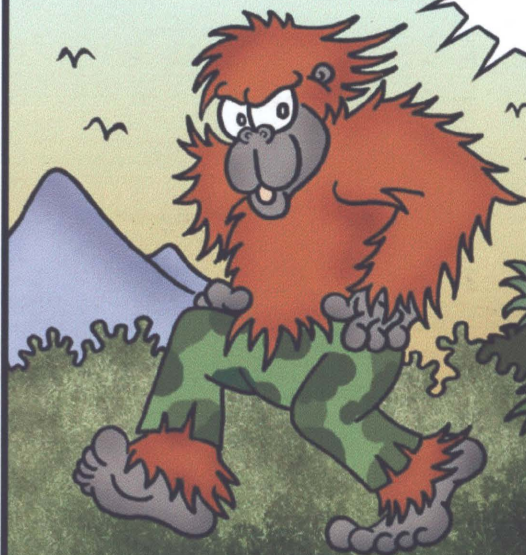
THE



# CRYPTOZOLOGY FILES

BY MARK NORTH

HA.. HA.., VERY FUNNY  
LADS. OKAY A JOKES A  
JOKE, NOW GIVE ME  
BACK MY TROUSERS  
RIGHT NOW!!!!



MARK NORTH/CFZ © 2003

**LOCATION: SUMATRA, INDONESIA**

**CASE: THE ORANG PENDEK**

DAMP, WEARY AND FOOT-SORE, THE CFZ ADVENTURERS OF THE PROJECT KERINCI EXPEDITION MAKE CAMP IN THE REMOTE DENSE RAINFOREST OF SUMATRA, ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT STRANGE THINGS ARE A HAPPENING.

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Typeset by Jiggy Johnson

"...and there'll be kips and valinas for the kids"